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THE SON

I

THE GREAT REVOLUTION

RELIGION is the oldest and most universal of all the matters occupying the human mind. It is the most interesting, the most engrossing, and the most influential upon manners, customs, and institutions. This is confessed on all sides—both by those who think religion everything, and by those who think it nothing. National tradition, the epic, the lyric, the drama, dynasties, endless genealogies, architecture, sculpture, numismatics, philosophy itself, all record religious facts and ideas from the grey dawn of civilisation to its golden meridian. Religion, the epicurean tells us, is the cause of all the crimes, all the errors, all the absurdities man has ever been guilty of, and it is only fair to the deities to suppose that they really have had no hand in the follies and wickednesses ascribed to them.

Of late years there has been a tendency to regard religion as a sort of congenital disease—a bad strain

from some disordered succession of unlucky antecedents. Being itself so worthless and so obstructive to a sound vitality, it has been held scarcely worth any serious inquiry as to the nature of the antecedents that have cast so dark a shadow before them into the world that was to be. But if we finally are to fall back upon matter as containing within itself the seed of religion, then we soon come to the root of the whole question, for there is no opinion so universal as that matter is essentially and incurably infected with evil.

As to the history of religion—that is, as to the facts of the case—there really is not much difference of opinion. Hitherto, indeed, it has not been thought worth much labour or exactness. It has been almost abandoned to theorists, and lies much at the mercy of the ingenious gentlemen who think religion evolved from the seasons, from the habits of life, or from mere accident. As the Almighty is as much in the great fact of religion—that is, in the universal custom of religious observances—as in any antecedent causes that can be imagined, we may be content with the fact that religion there has been always and everywhere.

Till a long way down the annals of authentic and indisputable history, religion combined the most conflicting and contradictory elements. On the one hand, there were everywhere long-established and widely-observed religious ideas and customs, having

the strongest hold on the affections, if not always the faith, of the people. On the other hand, frequent changes and an almost unlimited freedom of inquiry. For ages the questions were, Is there a God? Are there gods? What are they? What is their nature? How came they to be? What are they to us or we to them? How do they employ themselves? These were speculative questions. They appealed to the imagination chiefly, for reason was much at fault in the matter. In fact, ancient philosophy never showed itself so ill as when it approached the religious question. The physical science of antiquity was not more materialistic than ours, for it generally supposed final causes and benevolent designs; but it was also ever in search of the material elements which it could plausibly credit with creative and conservative energy.

The less hold the traditional religion had on the reason and on the moral instinct, the more did it flourish in all manner of outward show. It crowned the fairest spots of the earth with temples of unsurpassed beauty. On every day of the year it worshipped a deity, or commemorated a preternatural event. It filled the thoroughfares with magnificent processions that sages and politicians pressed to behold and to make the best they could of. It occupied the youthful mind of the world with poems and philosophies more enduring than temples and ceremonials.

The grave questions that ever presented themselves were treated lightly and easily. Did these gods and goddesses really exist? Whence had they come? Had they not been transplanted, and dressed up with new names and attributes? What was the heart and core of all this gorgeous exterior? What was the substance or element of these aerial beings? How came they to be up there in the heavens above, while we are down here below? Did gravity settle the question? Poets and writers of fiction dealt with these beings as freely as our own novelists do with historical personages.

The most graceful writers and the most powerful orators of our times have discussed these divinities, be they traditions or creations of the vagrant fancy, as seriously as did their pagan worshippers, and perhaps more discriminately. They have dwelt on the character of Jupiter, of Apollo, of Artemis, of the Goddess of Love, as if ready to exclaim, But for our Creed we could almost be pagans! They have shown us what an inexhaustible treasury of refined enjoyment the Romans had in a religion which brought some manifestation of the deity to every hill, every spring, every wood, and some pious and picturesque association to every day in the calendar.

Free republics and liberal emperors tolerated any religion that did not threaten to usurp political functions. Philosophers and the legion of men living by their wits, tongues, and pens, very early propounded

the very grave question, Were all these gods, after all, one God? Were they several personalities or representations of deity? Were they one as being indissolubly bound by mutual relations? The human race is one in humanity. Is the divine one in deity? For centuries before Christ the civilised world used the expressions God, deity, and the gods quite indifferently, in the same breath as one might say. 'Deity' itself was used in various senses. It might be an element, or a nature, communicable, transferable, inherited, capable of multiplication, and perhaps also of differentiation. All this language was materialistic, that is, it seemed to suppose matter lighter than ours, more subtle, more spiritual, more penetrating, and more capable of extraordinary acts and surprising effects, but still matter and subject to some laws of matter. Such were the questions on which very grave and ingenious men wrote treatises read and admired in their day. Such were the religious questions that were amusing rather than edifying the civilised world over two thousand years ago, and can even find a soft corner in the hearts of good Christian scholars at the present day. That which had once been the religion or the philosophy of the civilised world, and had been both its devotion and its education, could not easily be quite extinguished. It left a language, a grammar, habits of thought and underlying beliefs that made their appearance in all controversy for centuries after the Christian era, and are still slow to disappear.

About twelve hundred years after the golden age of classic mythology, when the gods having attained to their best had now come down to their worst, and when the whole civilised world was engaged in the free discussion of their existence, nature, habits and powers, there was a great revolution. The whole matter of religion, and of religious inquiry and religious philosophy, totally changed its character. In a day, it might be said, at least as fast as the news of certain events could reach the world, the one all-absorbing question was asked, and is asked to this day, 'Who and what was Jesus of Nazareth?' Now for the better and maturer life of the world crowds of divinities, ancient hierarchies, immemorial rites and pompous ceremonies have paled and disappeared before the light of one name, one person, the reputed son of a craftsman in a district which was a by-word, and in a village which was a by-word even in that ill-favoured and ill-reputed district. On any supposition whatever, the fact as thus stated would be incredible but for it being a fact beyond all dispute.

The miracles very suitably accompanying this second creation of man in the image and likeness of his Maker account to any believer for the foundation, the rapid spread, and the final establishment of the Christian Church. So far the faith of a Christian is reasonable and accountable. The unbeliever, on the other hand, believes that in a very small out-of-the-way village in Syria—a village described by modern

travellers as far out of any route, and rather difficult of approach—a carpenter, after thirty years' employment in simple handicraft, left his shop, collected a few uneducated men of as humble a rank as his own, and with no other weapons but talking and preaching totally revolutionised the civilised world, making it indeed a much grander and more self-constituted world than the most far-seeing sages of antiquity could possibly have conceived. We may reasonably ask whether such a success without miracles would not have been a far greater miracle than any that Scripture relates? But, with miracles or without them, so it came to pass that at the very point of time when Rome, that is, the civilised world, had attained its most comprehensive unity, its most irresistible strength, its greatest glory and its surest hope of eternal dominion, a Galilean peasant in a very short time, without an effort, indeed deprecating ambition and disclaiming power, received into his hands all this empire, all this power, all this glory, and became then and for ever the spiritual monarch of the human race.

In all history there is no such disproportion between the cause and the effects, the means and the end. For the first thirty years of His life nothing whatever is known about Jesus except that He was under the paternal roof, pursuing an ordinary trade, and keeping the Jewish feasts and holidays. It can only be surmised that He had some acquaintance with the young men who afterwards went about with Him. Nothing

whatever, except the vaguest tradition, is known of His aspect, His figure and bearing. He was not eloquent after the Greek or Roman fashion, and His style is indeed more vernacular Syriac than cultivated Classic. There were great philosophers, historians, naturalists, and poets—epic, lyric and dramatic—in those days, and even astronomers. He could find a place in none of those classes. The whole presentation is so slight, so incomplete, so unstudied, that the critic can only note its wants and blemishes. Even in our own country, which still retains much of its ancient piety, Jesus has been charged with gross ignorance, with extravagant self-conceit, with ridiculous ambition, and with the frenzy of irrational disappointment. It is certain His companions all deserted Him in the trying hour, seeing, as the expression is, the bubble had burst, and each one had to take care of himself. All this drama, or farce as some prefer to think it, was played and played out in three short years. Many impostors have had a much longer run than this, even in our own country, and in very recent times. There was no reason why this imposture, if it were such, should not be exploded and forgotten from the moment the leader met with his just deserts. There had been nothing to call a tangible policy : no promises addressed to the vulgar apprehension or appetites, no bribes, no shares of conquered land, no doles, no games, no triumphs, no forty days to be abandoned to a long delirium of wildest joy and wickedness, as

when Augustus had subjugated the world. When Jesus hung on the cross, absolutely nothing remained of word or work, except the pitiful record that 'We trusted it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.'

In a very few years, all the questions that had exercised the old world gathered round this one person. Every difficulty that had perplexed the old philosophers, and divided them into various schools, now found a new form in the great question, Who and what was the man who had done this? All agreed, for it was impossible to deny it, that one man had done it, and the main facts of his life were as undeniable as his existence. But to do all this he must have been more than man. To ascertain and define what that 'more' was became the employment of thousands, bred—as all were then bred—in the schools of an already ancient philosophy. There was then no other way of entertaining and discussing the question. It had to be done in language. But all the language, all the conceptions, all the theories of those days were philosophic, that is, of the best and highest philosophy that mankind had yet attained to. The scriptures of the Old Testament could not be translated into Greek, then the only universal language, without a large use of Platonic words and ideas, even so far back as the opening chapters of Genesis. Nay, even we, remote as we may think ourselves from the days of heathen philosophy, can hardly express ourselves on the com-

monest subjects without every now and then sliding into the ancient groove.

But it was even more the turn and direction of the controversy that the rising Church of Christ received from heathen antiquity than its terms and expressions. The great question that now divided the civilised world was the nature, not of the deity, or of the gods, or of the demi-gods, or of the undefinable class of heroes, but of this one Man, and more than man, as he could not but be. The various schools of philosophy found their respective places in this new field of speculation. With all their long experience, all their successions of great masters, all their subtlety, all their labour, they could never get further into the heart of the mystery than that Jesus of Nazareth was a new birth and a new revelation, Son of man in a sense man had not known before, Son of God in a sense exceeding the compass of man's understanding.

Emboldened by tolerance and unbelief, philosophers and antiquaries had now been four centuries at work on the historical basis and the personalities of mythical tradition. The hold upon facts was weak, and with threads that might be gold, but drawn very fine. Saturn had once reigned on earth. Did his sons now divide earth, air, sea, and the realms below? There might have been a Juno, but her native soil was uncertain; indeed, every considerable city had a Juno of its own. Mars was a ruffian in Greece, a gentleman at Rome. Diana represented the elements at Ephesus,

but combined human and divine attributes elsewhere. Many traditions centred in Hercules, but the personal requirements of all may be met by supposing him to represent the various qualities of European barbarism. But we must not go deeper into the melancholy bathos of pagan mythology. Wild invention and bold speculation were suddenly stopped as effectually as if this globe had been brought to a standstill by collision with another planet. The only question now was a practical one, 'Who and what was Jesus of Nazareth?' Henceforth this was the one universal topic of the intellectual and the eloquent. They that doubt His miracles cannot deny this. The Syracusan mechanist undertook to move the world if people would only grant him that which his lever was to turn upon. Jesus of Nazareth arrested the earth in mid career, and gave it a new heavenward direction. What had He to stand upon?

Besides that the main question was now altogether different from that of the old world, the premises and antecedents, the understandings and conditions of the old controversies had now disappeared, and we have to ask what took their place. Up to the Christian era, and till centuries after, mankind believed in a chaos, in the eternity of matter, and consequently of evil, in various forms of divine and spiritual existence, in associated godheads, in hereditary and communicable divinity, and in much else that now only appears to us as the reveries of good men abstracting them-

selves from things of earth to get a better insight into heavenly things. We can neither discard nor accept these personal revelations, for they have to be much sifted. Upon the whole, the earth is poor in these matters—poor, at least, in that which can at all reach the understanding. All truth here below is in earthen vessels with much dross and base alloy, and it has to be refined—indeed, twice or thrice refined. That must be our judgment on the truth current as such in the bygone centuries, as it doubtless will be the judgment of censors yet to come.

But in the main, what was the actual revolution that history relates at what we sometimes call the Augustan Era, sometimes the Christian? The long agonies of civil war had ended in the formation of a great empire, and there was a calm. It had its glory and its fruit. All Greece flowed into Rome, bringing the arts and sciences, the epic and the lyric, soon to be followed, not to say supplanted, by satire, or the sad reflections of empire upon itself. The world had leisure and security for the consideration of its true destiny and its highest interest. What immediately ensued was what often occurs in the lives of the thoughtless and improvident. They have long been asking for an opportunity, and now that it is come they are not prepared to use it. There seemed to be now an end of imaginative faiths and erroneous philosophies; at least, they no longer constrained the conscience or commanded the reason. Man seemed

to stand on the edge of a dark abyss. There was nothing to attract the eye, or to rest the wings of thought. The idea of the Infinite and Eternal seemed to paralyse, if not annihilate, man's petty, feeble, fleeting existence. Faith, or rather hope, was left, and it told of One Almighty God, the Spirit that filled all space and exceeded all measure of time. But He who had at once dispeopled space and revealed the One Omnipotent, sent His only Son into the world, to abide there for the term of a human life, to return to Him, and, indeed, never to be really away from Him.

As mankind became familiar with the event, and to accept in various degrees the fact and the significance, they made bold to criticise it, to examine it, to test it, and to put philosophic constructions upon it. If the object were to win souls and to extend the Kingdom of Christ there was no great difficulty in the doctrine of one God and one only Son. But that which was simple had to be made difficult, at least philosophers and theologians so thought, if they were to be allowed any reason for existence. The life and the words of Our Lord did not absolutely require libraries, temples, and hierarchies to explain or to recommend them, else had it been hard, indeed, on the meritorious toilers and slaves of industry. But libraries, temples, and hierarchies there are, and will be, and we have to deal not only with truth, but with its expositors and interpreters.

To those who are at all in a position to ask questions, and to pursue them, there is enough of questionable matter in the history of the Church from its beginning to this present hour. That is no more than must be said of all human affairs. But human affairs are never quite incapable of a decisive treatment, and we have often to form decisions upon them under the pressure of circumstances, whether we wish it or not. If any one says that the entire history of religion is such a confusion of ideas, and such a continual torrent of passion, folly, vice, and hypocrisy, that nothing is to be made of it, and the best thing to be done with it is to leave religion to those who like it, that is intelligible. But is it reasonable?

Supposing such a man to have some acquaintance with history, and to be capable of a survey, we have to ask what it is that he deliberately accepts and prefers to the faith of the Christian. It is, indeed, an amazing conclusion, and whoever has come to it and settled in it, has at least a capacity for the marvellous, indeed the impossible. He believes, if such an acceptance can be called belief, that the whole of this world, as we see it, as we hear of it, as we know it, as we read of it, as it leaves in us at least lifelong impressions, is worse than a folly, worse than a madness, for even madness may have a method. He believes that a long and universal expectation was baulked of its object, and a sublime desire even derisively thwarted. He believes that a

vast proportion of once popular, and then dying faiths, and of well-threshed and well-sifted philosophies, yielded nothing but chaff, and when flower and leaf had fallen nothing remained, not even to take their place. He believes that the chief races of humanity had been marshalled in the great battle-field of the world, leaving nothing decided, nothing won. He believes that all we see now in the establishment of One great Name, alike in the new and the old world, has had no foundation except in a particular conception of humanity, some vague expectations, and some sweet and persuasive utterances. Nay, he does not believe this, for in truth he cannot stop short of believing that the Man who still holds the world in the palm of His hand was a fanatic, perhaps an impostor.

II

ELEVATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL AS WELL AS OF THE RACE

THE word revolution has received such various senses from history, that it might seem hardly applicable to the foundation of the Church of Christ. It has been applied to a transference of the seat of empire, to the substitution of one form of government for another, or of one dynasty for another, or of one spiritual despotism for another. Great discoveries and inventions have been described as revolutions, such as the discovery of gunpowder, of the art of printing, of the mariner's compass, of the true theory of the solar system, of the steam-engine, of electricity, of railways, and of photography. Many other such steps have there been in the progress of the world, and we have all much reason to be thankful for them. So far as regards the magnitude and beauty of our cities, the strength of our armies and navies, the capacity of our ports, the facilities of movement, the industrial aspect of the country, the universal and daily dissemination of knowledge, the supply of food, the security of person and property, the advance made in our own

lives has amounted to a revolution that we may be proud of as well as very grateful for.

But it is indisputable that all these very important steps in secular and national progress, not only in the last nineteen centuries, but in the whole history of the world, do not altogether equal the one surpassing change described above as 'The Great Revolution.' In some respects at least it transcends all that man has done, and all that man can do to better his condition. It has given him a loftier and truer sense of his state, his powers, his opportunities, his infinite relations, his immortal destiny, his Divine sonship, his great human brotherhood, his relative duties, his proper dignity, his social and political rights, his privilege of access to the Almighty, and of spiritual communion with all in the same holy bond.

That all who are called Christians are sensible of this new birthright can no more be maintained than that all the children of Adam have duly appreciated the rights and duties of their common humanity. It would be in accordance with universal analogy that, the higher the state, the less it has been apprehended, and the loftier the calling, the lower the downfall. Nevertheless, as a wreck or a ruin may indicate the original structure, so does the actual state of Christendom, lamentable as it is in comparison with what it should be, reveal a heavenly interposition. If a large part of the human race, even at our very doors, are in a state not easy to be described as a heavenly

citizenship, such as becomes the city of God, they are themselves painfully and dangerously conscious of it. They have not lost what they ought to have and to be without being conscious of a defect and sensible of a wound.

They know there must be something wrong, even if they do not know exactly the nature of the complaint, or even its seat, still less its remedy. But as the fevered and the agonised roll themselves, seeking relief in one position or another, and finding it in none, so the masses of population that we are wont to regard as dark, neglected, or outcast, still writhe as if under a certain sense of wrong, as if forced or cheated out of their just share in a glorious heritage. If the people that still lie in darkness around us do not know what it is they miss, do not go the way to find it, and so become the easy prey of political and social fortune-tellers, the fact itself becomes matter for investigation, interpretation, and remedial treatment.

It may be said that in all ages there was disaffection and actual revolt, and that therefore the like of them in these days shows nothing more than that man is naturally a discontented being, always wanting more than he has, and not easily satisfied as to the terms on which it is to be obtained. But what was ancient disaffection, and what were the historical revolts? They were for very specific causes, and generally on very distinct and intelligible grounds. People rose against their conquerors, their oppressors, their masters, their

owners, their landlords, or their rivals in industry or in power. They rose against tyrannies, supremacies, aristocracies, oligarchies, and excessive taxation. Class trod on the heels of class, and the numbers of the weak clubbed against the strength of the few. Hunger provoked many seditions, superfluities tempted to more. The causes and objects of these old world movements were generally common, natural, and earthly. People sought to obtain by force or cunning what they felt they had not their due share of. They wished to be as well off as others, or rather to have their own share and the best bit in some other shares. Whatever it was they wished for it was still in the old lines. There was no such thing in ante-Christian antiquity as a general movement of all classes for the elevation of every individual soul. The human character was supposed to admit of no improvement. No serious fault was ever found with the pervading ideas of life, which, whether good or bad, were thought incorrigible. The principles of government were dictated by the chiefs of parties, the dispensers of preferment, and the holders of power, and therefore had to be let alone. The project of hoisting up the solid globe was hardly less inconceivable than the possibility of any great moral improvement. So little did the ancients expect elevation, or credit humanity with an upward direction, that on the authority of history, poetry, and all domestic tradition, they believed that every successive generation was worse than the last,

and that such would probably be the case for all time to come. Though the Romans had absolute confidence in the unlimited extension and eternal duration of their empire, they still, somewhat inconsistently, expected that in the moral scale it would be a continual descent from bad to worse. Indeed, they scarcely wished it to be otherwise, for the policy of Rome, like that of the Grecian States, required an immense population of the dependent, proletarian, and mercenary classes ; and whether for work or for war, they found absolute license, in the moral relation, the most convenient solution of the social difficulty. It is true that within this mass of corruption there did arise endearing and ennobling relations between masters and servants, insomuch that a slave did often become a son of the house. This, however, was a very exceptional incident, and not so infallible a success but that the freed man was still only a freedman, and his son only a freedman's son to the end. What was worse, but to be expected, while the higher caste failed to save moral self-respect, the lower caste certainly told in a general inferiority of tone.

In no religion, no philosophy, no political constitution of Western antiquity, any more than in the East to this day, was there the hope, or the barest idea, of such a Divine intervention as should absolutely and really raise to a higher state every human being fulfilling the necessary conditions. To the Greek and to the Roman, not to speak of more caste-bound

peoples, the very notion of such a change would have been alarming and detestable, more so indeed than any conceivable revolution in the political state. Even good men were glad to feel themselves a chosen few, of celestial origin, of a quality never to be shared or invaded by the common rank. Indeed, for the preservation of their own higher state they relied not so much on any special purity, or other virtue, as on the purely animal life of the lower and working classes. It never was goodness that was to raise a man to the society of heaven. Heroism might, genius might, natural gifts might, the capricious power of some deity might, but certainly not that which the Christian holds to be equally possible to the sovereign and to the slave.

Moreover, whatever lowered part of the population lowered the whole. Vice was not the less seductive, not the less contagious, because it was exhibited in classes to whom it was a glory rather than a shame. They whose very condition made them the willing servants of sin, unwittingly avenged their social wrongs by contaminating and debasing their masters and their oppressors—indeed, by reducing to their own level those who on no account would have allowed their admission to the higher.

A challenge has often been made by Christian apologists, and taken up by writers possessing, as they thought, special sources of information, or a special power of seeing below the surface of things. It is

that no other religion unites so high a standard with so plain a demand that the professor shall live up to it, and be what he professes to be. At once there will rise in the mind of the reader the multitudes that are Christian in name, profession, and outward privileges, but in no spiritual sense that man can bring to bear on the case. All that has to be encountered and disposed of. The fact remains. The Christian is bound to be a Christian. If he is not, all the world notices it. Everybody is at liberty to scrutinise the inconsistent Christian, and remind him of his duty to his Saviour, his Lord and his Master. Even in political questions of the most complicated character it is always deemed allowable to appeal to the court of Christ.

The Levitical law was a departure and a descent from the divinely instituted law of nature, and in one important matter was a concession to the hardness of the human heart. But even the wide license of that law was not enough. Judges, priests, kings, and even prophets, were polygamists, though with condemnation always impending and often terribly executed. The religion of the Koran has often been adduced as equal, if not in some respects superior, to the religion of the Gospel. Its effects are seen in the harem, in cruelty, in extortion, and in a misrule which has depopulated the fairest regions of the earth, and given them back to wild nature, robbers, and plagues. Whatever may be said by scholars and ethnologists

of the various Oriental faiths, drawing their estimates from books of inscrutable origin and unknown antiquity, the Indian or the Chinese ruler may have the admiration and reverence of his co-religionists, and be at the same time a monster of cruelty, avarice, and sensual appetite. You are told, indeed, that the first principle of government in these countries is a sublime humanity; but you find it carried out by a succession of judicial massacres.

III

WHO AND WHAT WAS THE AUTHOR?

WE justly, indeed necessarily, sum up the character of our Lord Jesus Christ in two expressions. He was Son of man and Son of God. As Son of man He is all to us that man can be for our good, for there is not a human office or relation which He does not illustrate with a universality and a completeness, an awfulness and a tenderness, we cannot elsewhere find or imagine.

But before these words have been read through it will already have been asked, perhaps impatiently, How did the Son of man show Himself also the Son of God?

No presentation of Divine Sonship could be simpler or more adapted to the comprehension of the simpler folk who are the great majority of mankind. It is true our Lord brought His disciples now and then to the verge of a great mystery; and it is true the Gospels leave us still gazing upwards and expectant. But the record of Christ's Sonship is as easy as a child's tale. Jesus of Nazareth was named by His Father, brought to His Father's house, and devoted to

His Father. He visited His Father's house on solemn occasions, and did the customary duties to His Father. From childhood to manhood He performed the obedience due from son to father. After receiving His Father's solemn recognition and blessing, He was led by the Spirit of His Father to prepare for a tremendous conflict with the great enemy, and He then conquered with weapons from His Father's own armoury. He prayed to His Father oftentimes, indeed presumably always, before the performance of miracles. He prayed to His Father for the complete conversion and strengthening of His disciples. The powers of omniscience and omnipotence He ascribed to the Father. It was the Father who had allowed Him to be given up to the Roman governor, and the Father who would send Him twelve legions of angels if He so desired. Like other faithful members of the House of Israel, He recited the Psalms of the established Hebrew ritual, and used their impassioned language to convey His devotions and heart longings to the throne of Almighty grace. He surrendered His will to His Father's will, not in the sense that a man may subordinate one feeling to another, or one object to another, but as one person may allow the whole of himself to be nothing in the scale in comparison with another.

Indeed, nothing can be more distinctly stated than the actual relation of the Son to the Father. The description of it is much more emphatic than

anything to be found in the common narratives telling of the bearing and conduct of sons to their fathers. In these it is usually deemed sufficient praise to say that the son did as well as his father, or better, and that he respected the memory of his father perhaps even so far as to avenge the wrongs done to him. Even when father and son survive long enough to take their respective parts on the same living stage of public affairs, the result is seldom entirely what it ought to be, and there is at least a want of proper deference to the paternal authority, good-will, and advice. It often comes to both having as little as possible to do with one another. But Jesus Christ is ever, so to speak, hanging on His Father.

To this account of the Divine Sonship it will at once be rejoined by not a few readers that, complete as it may be against those who regard Jesus Christ as only a representation of the Father, it ascribes to Him no more Sonship than a theist claims for every good man worshipping and serving our common Father. No doubt every man with a glimpse of reason and conscience is a son of God, and many men possess singular claims to that high character. We have thus to advance over ground which has been the battle-field of many controversies, which cannot but be difficult, and cannot but make large demands on our higher intelligence and our habits of faith.

In the midst of these utter prostrations before the

Almighty Father, Jesus declares Himself to be one with His Father, and even assures an impatient disciple that whoever had seen Him had seen the Father. But He immediately promises that they who continue steadfastly with Him, and share His trials, shall be one with Himself. Though we may not conclude that the oneness between the Almighty Father and the All-prevailing Son is only that which might be between the Divine Master and His faithful disciples, or that between two good men so fortunate as to be quite in harmony, yet the coincidence of the same words being used on two consecutive occasions warns us not to give to the higher unity such a meaning as shall practically exclude distinction of persons altogether. The simplest mind accepts easily and gladly the announcement of two persons being at one, but utterly recoils from the idea of two persons being absolutely one.

The entire Christian world has always accepted, without hesitation or doubt, unless from a few theorists, the idea of a single representative of the Almighty on this earth. Adam, in the state of innocence, would be God's only son ; indeed, in the genealogy he is called the Son of God. Till the evolutionists make a better case for their baseless and barren philosophy, we must suppose one or more progenitors of the human race spiritually guided, sustained, and educated by some kind of daily intercourse with the Creator, till the human family were

able to take care of themselves—that is, if we are even now able to take care of ourselves without the Divine aid.

The most popular and the most incredible tale put into the hands of an English boy is the story of a poor castaway supposed to be monarch of all he surveyed, and to be actually educating the lower creatures into real companionship. It has been sufficiently proved that the story is impossible without a Divine intervention. Yet the notion of man being first a unit, then the father of the human family, is ineradicable. But whatever we may suppose Adam to have been, and in whatever state we take him, he was, by the very supposition, weak, imperfect, and finally ruined—a failure as we may say. The story of that Fall is but an epitome of man's history, and relates what was either antecedent in fact, or consequent in invention. There must have been a Divine investiture before it could be lost or sullied. Adam in his degree received a kingdom, a power, and a glory, by the gift of that intelligence by which 'the sons of God shouted for joy' when the foundations of the earth were laid.

By that precedent and example the Almighty might assuredly be supposed to introduce into the world one immeasurably more worthy to be called His Son, exercising immeasurably greater powers with the sure promise of a truly spiritual dominion, without the possibility of a fall—indeed, in all

respects certain to accomplish that which had been conditionally granted and designed in Adam. One can just conceive this as one can infer the idea of a God from our own nature, the idea of an Almighty Father of all from a natural parent, or the idea of a Creator from a common artificer. But it must remain a matter of faith, for the unassisted reason and the unguided experience certainly cannot comprehend such a Second Adam. It cannot even form the conception of a perfectly good man when the fulfilment of the conception will have to be according to circumstances wholly beyond human forethought. If any man should propose to himself to perform the part of a good man, and to frame an ideal accordingly, as a master shipwright makes a model for a man-of-war, he would only live to find that he had made a great mistake, and would be fortunate if he anticipated others in that discovery. In this world there could not be a perfect son of man unless he were also in a special sense Son of God. He must be at once God to man and man to God. Short of this there must be failure.

IV

ABSOLUTELY EXCEPTIONAL CHARACTER AND PRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST

SOME will think the above a needlessly discouraging estimate of humanity, and even an arraignment of Almighty wisdom and goodness. Is it quite the fact that the very exalted order of beings He has placed on this earth and surrounded with so many natural aids and inducements to goodness should really find perfection impossible? Is it true that man cannot be that which he ought to be? We are told to press for a goal. Is it quite unattainable? We fill our galleries with the typical exemplars of virtue in every one of its many forms. Are they all impostors, and ought we rather to inscribe on the pedestals and picture-frames that they were not what they might have been?

It must be answered that this world is but a beginning, and whatever may be hereafter writ of it will still commence with the everlasting initial 'In the Beginning.' It is a world of beginnings and decisive though not conclusive determinations. It is a world of impulses, inceptions, anticipations, and what are called 'prospectings' over the vast domain

of the future. We can order this instant of time but not the next, except that the law we have delivered this instant will henceforth be imposed upon ourselves. We all discuss moral questions as if time was an eternal standstill, and human affairs were waiting our leisurely review.

The student of history finds his work ever growing in every direction. For the relief of memory, heart, and mind, he is glad to single out for special attention the most illustrious sovereigns, statesmen, politicians, philosophers, men of business, and men of letters, and much do they cheer his way. But he could not point to any one of these historical personages as having been accepted by a large portion of the human race as a rule and pattern of life applicable to all conditions, and a true king of kings, or as being at all likely to be so accepted, unless under compulsion and with some convenient waiving of serious objections.

Nobody with a heart will readily pronounce a final judgment and a capital sentence on the entire human race. Nobody can pretend to span all its excellences, or to weigh and measure the comparative merits of so many stars differing the one star from another in glory. It is not possible to estimate with indifferent justice the best men now living and acting their respective parts in the present stage of the great human conflict. We like and we dislike; we sympathise; we abhor; we think we understand and fully enter into; but we

cannot fathom or entirely comprehend. While we are thinking to ascertain the position and dimensions of the grander specimens of humanity around us, we find ourselves drifting and our bearings lost. So we have to betake ourselves to the comparatively calm and measurable field of the past for a surer and better estimate of humanity.

But here we find that lapse of time, even for a few years, adds to the difficulty of all questions affecting personal character and personal pretensions. Let us suppose ourselves so confident of human perfectibility as to set about looking for approximate instances, or, what is more likely, endeavouring to place on a lasting pedestal some one cherished ideal hero or saint. The task we are proposing to ourselves is to investigate the genesis and trace the growth of some great reputation, someone winning the admiration and confidence of a few, and through them of more, till it might be said the whole land was filled with his glory. Yet he was man, engaged with men in action, in controversy, in various competitions; taking his part in what must be called the vitiated current of human affairs; liable to error, indeed to mistakes great and small; obnoxious to stricture, and compelling his most congenial and most attached friends to exercise a certain amount of discrimination. If they could not always do what he did, or say what he said, they had to give the reason why, and what was their defence would be reflective upon him. The case of the indi-

vidual good man thus becomes the case of a cause, that is, the cause of which he is the leader, or the popular representative, or the brightest and greatest figure. To pronounce such a man absolutely good becomes a serious question when the goodness attributed has to be redistributed rateably among a crowd of deeply-attached and much-deserving followers.

There might always have been difficulties, but, at first, they were not felt by the generous and confiding. At least they were not recognised. The advent of the great and good man is spontaneous ; the apparition presents itself in a blaze ; the growth of the party is by laws of cohesion and attraction ; the movement is with a rush ; confidence comes with numbers ; by the time the crowd has conglomerated it is unable to abate its own impetus, or even to see who and what there is before it. Factions, parties, and causes, whether in the Church or in the world at large, have not much that can be called a common conscience, or a common rule of right and wrong.

Time brings revelations, second thoughts, disappointments, calm reviews, sober estimates of the end proposed, conscientious regard to the means, juster measurements of persons and things, and the ever-growing, ever-rankling question how far personal responsibility between man and his Maker is absolved by an absolute surrender of it to one high-minded, self-willed, impulsive, impetuous man, who never knew what it was to respect the claims of a fellow-

creature, if they stood in the way of his own colossal and rightful pre-eminence. He may remain the same, unchanged as a social force or as a prodigious outcome. But in course of time the movement flags, the accumulation disintegrates, the whole form is hardly to be identified, and the reason why of the whole business is severely inquired into. In fact, the aggregate vitality has expired even quicker than the individual life; the party organisation has been irretrievably deranged; there is no longer even the cohesion of less organic parts. The world begins to wonder what and where that is which once occupied so large a space in the mind's eye and in the heart's emotions. Finally, before we can even prepare our minds for it, that which should be an angel of light spreading his wings for a return to his native skies—for so had man fashioned the inevitable departure—disappears in a dim haze of manifold eccentricities, leaving nothing but a long trail of laboured, but as the world has now come to feel, unsatisfying explanations.

But when it appears that human perfection, or what we may think such, is incapable of proof for the want of a competent judge, that it generally only makes an appearance to disappear, convicts itself, and is discredited, if not wholly forgotten, by posterity, how can we be sure of this one great exception to the universal law of imperfection? What man is competent to say that Jesus Christ was perfectly good,

and that even if His miracles be left out of the question, His unique personal goodness proves Him to be the only begotten Son of God? In these days it is no longer a few professional sceptics, but legion upon legion, that dispute the character quite as confidently as they do the miracles associated with it. Where, too, are we to go for the proof of character when the witnesses are themselves more or less wanting in that very thing, and when there is no infallible, or indeed trustworthy, judge among us?

It may be said, indeed, that within the compass of theological science there is no such thing as the character and presentation of Jesus Christ, for upon no point have there been more, or wider, differences. It depends quite as much on the receiver of the impression as on the giver of it. A coin does not change as it passes from one hand to another; but the human character does. This cannot be denied, and it is a truth to be borne in mind, not only by those who will listen to no objection, but also by those who easily flatter themselves they have raised a fatal objection, upon some plausible ground or other

It may be readily admitted that everybody's notion, or idea, of Christ is as much a reflex of himself as of Christ. He receives back, with or without interest, what he has contributed. It often happens that he walks up to the mirror and sees nothing but himself. He has preconceived the whole matter and left no room for addition. The same thing happens

every day with regard to all historical personages and prominent characters of the day. The historian, the critic, or the partisan has absolutely made up his mind on all the questions involved, and on the tests to be applied to character. The whole situation, the whole story, stands fixed in his mind, and he can give no other place in it to the character under consideration than he has always given. If he lived a century, and if every year of it brought fresh matter for consideration, he would remain the same, and his judgment be the same, whatever the object. He only repeats himself, and year by year his old decisions acquire stronger rights of prescription.

But Jesus Christ is not only a great historical character, foremost in history, eclipsing the most illustrious. There is this peculiarity, that the greater part of the civilised world, as it has done for half the life of history, comes to Him.

By an almost unconscious law of moral attraction the human race approaches, draws nigh, and contemplates. All have the wants which perhaps they alone quite know, and even they could not describe. They are still not a few who find what they wish to find. They want the hope of a better world to come. They want relief from the memory, and burden, and debt of sin. They want deliverance from evil possession. They want a moral guide. They want the contemplation of a grand ideal and of a glorious work. They want to see what could be seen through an opening in the heavens.

They want to look at One whom they could really regard as good, just, kind, and true. They want to recognise a true king, a true priest, a true brother, a true friend. They want to be sure there really is such a thing as goodness, and such a thing as truth. They want to find One whom they can really love, not merely with tongue or pen, but with heart and soul. All will find what they want, but the result is a certain diversity of character, that is of ideal, in the minds even of good Christian people. But no amount of diversity in the beholders can prevent the character of Jesus Christ from being one and the same, as He is one and the same.

Even circumstances and the merest accidents must tell in this matter. The theologian and the ploughman may be equally honest, equally devout, equally fervid. The one has to spend the long days in comparing texts, estimating authorities, plodding through histories, unearthing Councils, finding out, if possible, the meaning of Fathers, and reconciling revelation with physics and metaphysics as he has accepted them. On the other side, what is the simple process to be performed by the son of toil from boyhood to old age? He trusts in a sacred Name too awful to be questioned. He was bred to a pious custom and he endures in it. If he has left the church and the preacher, he may not be wholly and solely to blame. His view of the character and work of Christ may be imperfect and partial, but it rests on

what he most wants and can best understand. He cannot help fearing God, nor can he help loving Christ, though told he must fear and love both equally, indeed as one. But there is nothing in all this to imply a substantial or practical difference between the Christ of the theologian and the Jesus of the poor rustic, even though he has learnt his faith from the humblest, least privileged, and least learned minister of the Gospel.

To the recorded life of Christ there is nothing that can be specifically called wanting, unless, indeed, the critic chooses to lay down peremptorily his own notions as to the proper scale, scene, time, place, position and particular obligations of the world's Saviour, Teacher, and King. Humble as were the rank, occupation, circumstances, and friends of Jesus of Nazareth, and brief as was the period in which He did His work, He showed Himself to the world in the very centre of political affairs, at the very crisis of national development, and at the very focus of universal interest and attention.

The expectant eyes of the world were then fixed on Judæa almost as much as on Rome itself, where the Republic had been played out, liberty was in harness, if not chains, and the arts and sciences were in the wane. Life indeed there was even at Rome, but about this time Tiberius was at Capri, and Sejanus was 'dragged with a hook.' The poets and satirists were beginning to despair of the world.

Then came Jesus forth from His obscure and rugged home, preaching to the despised multitude, encountering friend and foe, face to face, with a ready answer to all comers, dismissing none without the fit reply, and coming successfully out of a hundred trials as difficult to common apprehension as the Temptation in the Wilderness. It was spontaneously declared by the simple, unsolicited bystanders that He spake as never man spake, and did all things well.

No doubt there is much to be said for the faithful and honest Minister of the Crown who, night after night, at the motley assemblage of a popular legislature, has to answer difficult and insidious questions sprung upon him from different quarters, and who keeps not only his temper but his presence of mind under successive provocations and waylayings. All honour to such servants of their country ; but the men who come well out of these conflicts will be the first to appreciate the dexterity and grace with which our Lord met alike the humblest suppliant, the weakest disciple, the craftiest questioner, and the bitterest foe.

V

FORMATION OF CHARACTER

THERE is a widespread opinion, or plausible theory, that character and life's course are formed by circumstances, and by a nature peculiarly fitted to make the best use of them. Such a theory runs counter to individuality, indeed, to real identity, for if a man receives the component parts of his nature from successive accidents, he is himself purely accidental, that is, nothing at all in the moral scale. As the theorists themselves always hold themselves exempted from the operation of their own theory, they can hardly be quite serious. They only think it good for talking and writing about, and for claiming a distinct superiority over the rest of the human species. They cannot but feel they have no standpoint for preaching or philosophising, unless they reserve to themselves a certain amount of absolute free-will quite independent of circumstances, indeed, overcoming them and mastering them. This reserve, which is a matter of course, is fatal to their theory, for they must either concede the gift of free-will to their fellow-

creatures, or lay claim to the exclusive possession of a Divine property, indeed, to be deities in the comparison with all other men.

This is a point on which every man is a competent witness, and certain to regard himself a competent judge and jury. Tell any man that his opinion is worthless, because it is the necessary outcome of a nature formed by circumstances over which he had no control, indeed, mostly anterior to his very being. He will resent it with great and honest indignation. His own inner consciousness tells him that he is absolutely independent of circumstances, and entirely free to decide on all moral questions, indeed, to form his own character. He may or may not have heard of pre-existence, or of the divinity of human nature, but he will never submit to have been turned out of a machine, or evolved from chance work.

Common parlance, which often illustrates the old saying that the voice of the people is the voice of God, pronounces very sharply on the liability of the will to contain injurious and sometimes fatal diseases. It speaks of the 'wilful,' of 'strong wills,' 'self wills,' 'headstrong wills,' and in the opposite sense of 'good will,' 'willing,' and so forth. A will prematurely formed and hardened by vicious or simply foolish self-indulgence, by an exaggerated self-estimate, by early foreclosure with particular theories, leaderships, and causes, is, so far, not a will at all, but rather a self-imposed bondage. A man who has brought him-

self to that pass that he must and will do that which he likes to do, simply because he likes it and there happens to be nothing to prevent him, has reduced himself to the rank of the lower animals with nothing but instinct and passion to guide them, and incapable of moral elevation.

In Pagan antiquity and far down into Christian, there was very little of that which we call freedom, or of what we include in that prerogative. The possessors of this royal gift were the men of good family, the privileged classes, citizens, priests, philosophers, and men of some literary eminence. They had the opportunity and the liberty to study opinions, traditions, and systems, though not always the liberty to make a perfectly free selection, and to carry it out to any practical conclusion. The mass of the people were the slaves of brute force and hard necessity. The spectacle of whole masses who could not call their opinions, indeed, hardly their lives, their own, could not but tell on those who were so far happier, and so far more accountable, inasmuch as they were still capable of a free choice. The daily sight of slavery, of its dreadful effects in the moral sense, and of its seeming necessity, recoiled on the minds of the nominally free, and made them feel the religious and moral sentiment a matter of accident or of necessity. Indeed, nothing is sadder than the extinction of the light of nature itself in the ages which had at least some advantages over us, in their comparative nearness

to the days when the Almighty Himself was the present King, Lawgiver, Teacher, and Trainer of man.

Under these very hard and perilous conditions, whole classes and large masses of the people had to surrender their liberty of thought and action to some one or other capable of supporting them as clients, or as slaves, or as debtors under bond, or as cattle to be bought and sold. There are still too many remains of painful and degrading necessity even in our days, and the victims are not confined to labourers and artisans compelled to work for hard masters, or to bind themselves in still more tyrannical combinations for the protection of their industry. It is an almost everyday occurrence to meet with people who have bound themselves to a name, or a school, or a train of speculation, evidently because they find themselves incapable of exercising their own modicum of the judicial faculty, and have therefore no alternative, so they feel, but to twine round the first dry stick they come across.

No doubt there is only too much truth in the supposed formation of character by circumstances, that is, only too much to be said in its favour with regard to the formation of most characters and careers. It is too much the fact that they are formed by contact and collision, by recoil and rebound. Certainly men often become what they never meant to be, and do a work they never would have entered upon had they foreseen it all. Such are impulsive and

imaginative characters, never quite under the command of reason, and never able or willing to plan a life's work, to count its cost, and set about it in a business-like fashion.

Even in that which must ever remain the most brilliant of eras, that which found Rome a Republic and left it an Empire, there is no instance of a steady life's course and regular development, proceeding from strength to strength, in which we can afford to leave circumstances out of account, and contemplate the man. There is always the feeling that the circumstances are more than the man, and that by them he has been made or unmade. He had opportunities, or he encountered opposition, or he roused jealousy, or he found himself face to face with long-standing and overwhelming obstruction. In successive collisions he may have won at last, but in any case he was not the man he had been before, in temper, and in all that constitutes moral identity.

Religious writers have somewhat favoured the application of the evolutionary theory to Jesus Christ, by insisting on the many causes and growths of time and the orders of events that seemed to converge, after running their appointed course, at what is justly called the fulness of time, when the old world seemed spontaneously to run down and wind itself up for a new course. Whatever had led up to Augustus Cæsar led up to Christ. Whatever had insured a reign of peace on earth favoured also the peace now pro-

claimed from heaven. But, surely, no one can ever suppose that the Almighty Orderer of events, whose very lowest title is Providence, would leave the world unprepared for the great work of its restoration? Surely everything is prepared for, and not even a babe can come into the world without finding ample preparation for its care and sustenance, indeed, for all it can want? Nevertheless, even if we suppose the greatest amount of preparation and of contributory circumstances, they cannot be wholly credited with the result of Christ and His Church. No force of circumstances could accomplish this. Indeed, no force of circumstances has ever worked the miracle of such a moral unity and perfectness as that before us.

VI

WE KNOW IN PART

In all the more important questions that may concern us we have to take facts as they present themselves, and to be content with very partial, superficial, and, it may be said, negative and even contradictory knowledge. In theory, what we do not know amounts to infinitely more than what we do know. In practice, what we do know is enough to engage all our attention and to occupy all our time. It is not plainly revealed to us, either by nature or by grace, whether we had ourselves an existence before our entrance into this world. That we find ourselves in this world is enough for practical purposes.

There are people who quarrel with their birth, their parentage, their relations, their country, their climate, the political institutions they find around them, their native tongue, and indeed everything about them which they cannot even attempt to improve. But if the Almighty be indeed in these things continually overruling man's default, it is plain we have to make the best of them. Not only have

we to bear them ; we have to beware of questioning the wisdom and the goodness of God as shown in these conditions of our present existence. By the same rule we have to make the best of the particular mode, and plan, and circumstances in which the Almighty proposes to rescue us from this confessed wreck and ruin, and give us a happier and more durable existence. It is contrary to all reason, and to all usual practice, to scrutinise closely the greatest conceivable gift offered to us on the performance of express conditions, the chief being that we duly qualify ourselves for its acceptance and enjoyment.

What, then, becomes of this feverish, not to say peevish, curiosity to learn exactly and scientifically Who this is that offers to conduct us from earth to heaven, from a vale of tears to the presence of the Eternal Father? Why should we be asking questions, indeed question upon question, each more impossible to be answered than the other, when we certainly know quite enough for the purpose, which is our eternal salvation? The common work of life, the discharge of our national and social obligations, the satisfying of problems coming to us every day, the decisions to be made now or never, the right word in the right place, the meeting of demands made on our time, our purses, or our loyalty, are all difficult, harassing, and often distressing. Of course we can be deaf to every call of duty, and live fat and easy lives, but so long as we listen to the voice of God in

our conscience and in the claims of common sympathy, we soon find work enough for the reasoning faculties, and have something to take trouble about. Then why are we to spend our lives in the utterly vain attempt to answer questions, nay more, to put questions, and compel instant answers to questions, which in the same breath we confess to be utterly beyond the reach of human comprehension? Every attempt to penetrate the mystery of the Divine nature and operations brings us to the edge of a precipice, from which we may strain our eyesight upwards and downwards, and in all directions, without the least glimpse of anything to satisfy our curiosity that we have seen more than the honest sons of toil. If we insist on reporting that we have seen something and know something, and that we enjoy in that respect a great superiority, we have to fall back on words, which are words, and liable to be nothing more. If the words we use to explain an incomprehensible mystery suggest anything at all, it is some idea which must necessarily be one thing in one mind, another in another, and which receives its moral significance from the tone of the speaker or of the hearer.

The moral affections do not necessarily change with time or circumstances. Love is for ever; hate is for ever; reverence is for ever; loyalty is for ever; rebellion is for ever; selfishness and greediness are for ever; pride and vanity are for ever; envy and jealousy are for ever—in fine, all good is for ever, and

all evil is for ever. In these respects a man may be easily supposed the same, even though better or worse for eternity, that is, as far as we can dare to look forwards. So, too, may we suppose a man unchanged in his relations to the Almighty and to other beings. The truth is, eternity does not come into the question at all in these matters, for, under the overwhelming influence of any strong feeling, eternity is a second of time, and a second of time, eternity. It is only in the absence of feeling that people begin to take measure of the infinite and the eternal, and to bridge over the infinite with materials supposed to be drawn from its own unfathomable depths. But even that is too favourable a description of the childish game of theological wrangling, which not only does not avoid impossible conclusions, but even courts them, and stakes their saving power on their manifest impossibility.

VII

SON OF GOD AND SON OF MAN IN THE NATURE AND STATE OF MAN

THE two titles of our Saviour—Son of God and Son of man—may be inscribed on the whole nature and condition of man ; and, in that sense, on every human being. In the qualified plural sense we are all sons of God and sons of man. We do not start out of nothing, or out of a sort of Chaos—a vast mass of matter waiting for life, order, organisation, and direction. We are severally the links in an eternal series. All that we are, and all that we have, so as it be good, is derived, conditioned, pre-engaged, and under eternal destination. It is inherited to be transmitted. Every living soul with its entire consciousness—that is, its own little world of thought and feeling, knowledge, and design—has eternal antecedents and eternal consequences. To arrest the latter at any point, and say there is nothing after it—nothing that concerns us—is not a negative act ; it is a positive act, as, indeed, all acts must be, and it is a very presumptuous act.

Each one of us is a drop in that great river which flows from Heaven to fertilise the world. Every one of us shares its origin and direction. Gifts of personal power and grace, dignity of birth, just pride of country, circles of friends, wealth, and whatever we may have of natural grace or goodness, are all heaven-sent and heaven-directed. They are all for the use of those whom our Lord came down to save. It is the first duty of those who possess these gifts, be it ever so small or ever so great a share of them, to ascertain on what conditions they are held and what is to be done with them. No soldier ever received so straight and peremptory a commission as that which the Christian—indeed, every intelligent being—receives from the moment he knows right from wrong, and feels that he is more than a brute. The needle is not truer to the polarity of the earth than the free conscience is to its Author's great design. What is it that hinders a universal obedience in which every-one takes his proper part in a work which, for aught he knows, is from eternity to eternity, and not bound to pole and pole? It is selfishness; it is the substitution of self for all and for Him that made all. It is the exaggeration of self and its petty claims, making self the beginning and end, the centre, the sovereign, the lawgiver, the high-priest, the creator and preserver. It is that which uses the marvellous powers of reason and imagination for the indulgence of the passions, or of daydreams, and the tyranny of

forcing them upon others. This is to be neither sons of God nor sons of man in a right sense.

All the moral ills have their liberties and laws, and they all combine and contribute to one mighty antagonism against the Author of all good. Selfishness has its code, which is that everyone may do that which is right in his own eyes, and its theology is that there is no Lord whom it need love, or fear, or concern itself seriously about. It believes in the right divine of the human individual to make the most of itself, to swell itself to the largest, to tower to the highest, to stretch to the uttermost, to out-proportion all men and things. As for Him who came and cometh from God to man, it has proved to its own satisfaction that He has long since returned to that He came from—a God, if you will have it; that there He is if He be at all, and there He must needs remain. If it is certain He is there, why look for Him elsewhere?

With most human beings the tale is soon told. Short and simple are the annals of the sensualist and the worldling. The animal instinct quickly develops and outgrows the scarcely received and little valued gifts of grace, and soon the creature, once blessed with a conscience and an intelligence, making it the master of its own fate, falls into the dreary ranks of evolution, with just consciousness enough to be satisfied with corruption and decay. But of the many it might be said that as they have received little,

they are so much the less answerable. They have fallen the less because they had less to fall from. That the units in a careless and brutish multitude, concerned only in the events of the day or the hour, should not trouble to find their place in an orderly procession from all time to all time, may seem only too probable. Better cannot be expected from the pariahs who find themselves thrown out of all caste and order, without even a place in earth's state and precedence.

With the higher and finer conscience and the larger range of consciousness there come greater trials, wider aberrations, and deeper downfalls. The nearer men are to the Divinity in their share of His delegated attributes, the less are they apt to bear in mind the Divine order by which in His presence the lowly are exalted and the mighty are brought low. Though they may daily ascribe to Him the kingdom, the power, and the glory, it may become their daily work to win all this for themselves. The wish itself is easy, for the heart itself is the dictator and the imagination its ready aid. With a bare sufficiency of powers and of means it readily commits itself to any career that promises to gratify and immortalise the projector. But if self can be self-glorious it can also be ignominious. It may mount a pedestal or creep into a hole. Whether it be adoration of self, or simply indulgence, it is alike prone to be insensible of that continual interchange of Divine blessings and human obedience by which

this world—and we know not how much more—is being trained for that which is still to be revealed, and which shall be for ever.

Man occupies a mid place between God and the brute. He is Divine and bestial. He has impulses, powers, and ample assistance to rise to the higher rank; he can more easily descend to the lower. He shares with the Almighty the government of this world and of its various inhabitants. He shares with the brute the passing joys and sorrows of a sensual existence. He cannot, at least he does not, poise himself steadily mid way, and maintain an undecided rank. He must either rise or fall. He must either gain or lose. He must either enter into nearer and still nearer, dearer and still dearer, relation to his Almighty Parent, or fall to where he can no longer call God his Father.

VIII

RIVAL CLAIMS TO THE MESSIANIC CHARACTER

BUT history, nay, it may even be said the earth to this day, is full of rival claimants to Divine and human sonship. Indeed, it could not fail to be the case when all are sons of God and sons of man, and many must be conscious of it. It requires not hundreds but thousands to sum up the enormous army of pretenders, or simple enthusiasts, who have presented themselves with messages, or missions, to their fellow-creatures, either with proof of miracles, or with the still more powerful argument of personal character and eloquence. Many even of those who have devoted themselves to the extension or the purification of Christ's Church have brought discredit on its special claims by fraud and imposture, and so cut the ground from under their own feet. Sons of man all are in one sense or another ; but how are we to distinguish the true and only Son of God, and say positively that He is such as there has never been and never will be, except in that one example? The more we inquire, the more difficult do we find the inquiry, till we may

reasonably envy the happier fortune of the simple multitude who must accept truth without even asking a question.

To those who do inquire the difficulty is immensely aggravated by the fact that many of these pretenders, and even impostors, had something to say for themselves. The Arabian impostor had a cause, for the Church then needed much correction. The same may be said of the religious movements of the Middle Ages, of the Crusades, and of various outbreaks of fanaticism on one side or another. Some of these have been genuine appeals to the public conscience and invitations to great works or good lives. They have the proof of success, and they challenge emulation. Even if the results have been mixed, or very short of expectation, still it is both fair and pleasant to credit them with what good they did.

How, then, do these numerous and various pretensions to a Divine personality or mission stand in comparison with the appearance and work of Christ? How shall even the ignorant be able at once to discriminate between the One Truth and the crowd of rivals and imitators? The best that can be said of them generally is that they made some great names at the cost of myriads left in their original slough, or changed only in name and form, or bound to some wrong principle, or some system destined to perpetual sterility as far as good works are concerned. The human unit becomes inconsiderable, indeed infinitesimal, in the

enormous, causeless, senseless aggregations of Oriental mysticism.

The Gospel call was addressed to the human race, and found an echo in every heart capable of its reception. It was addressed to man as man and as the Almighty had made him. It spoke to the individual, and yet recognised all his surroundings and all his relations, and introduced into his heart the whole family of mankind. From the height of the Divine it reached the depth of the human. It is the greatest drawback of human progress and of grand operations that they dwarf humanity, and reduce men to cogs in a wheel, or links in a chain. We cannot but pity the being that spends the best years of his life in watching the threads in a spinning-mill or on a power-loom. The intellectual diminution of the unhappy drudge is proved by the readiness with which he listens to advisers who only succeed in making the individual less than nothing in the warfare between labour and capital.

It is for the Gospel itself, and for the life, acts, and utterances of our Lord, that a unique character is claimed, as the evident voice of God to every soul of man. The record of it is vivid and indelible. No tale, no poem ever made and left such an impression. In the eyes and ears of the civilised world the Saviour is still seen and heard, touching every heart and understanding, and at home with everybody in his circumstances, his daily life, and his innermost

thoughts. Whatever may be said in favour of interpreters and ministers, there are few words or deeds in the Gospels that really need explanation or comment. It is possible, indeed, to find meaning within meaning, and meanings of larger or higher significance. It may be that here and there a meaning has to be guarded and saved from ill use; but there is always a first, obvious, and sufficient meaning, and it is something communicated direct from the Son of God to every human being whom the words have reached. It is always, too, plain and beyond the shadow of a doubt that He speaks for no advantage of His own, but for the hearer's good. The like cannot be said of the most popular and successful utterances known to history or literature. They are not for everybody; they are for classes, for partisans, or for those who can bring some return to the writer or speaker.

If we are at all prepared to admit the probability of the Almighty speaking directly into the very ears of His children, in order to recall them from their fatal errors and degradation, we must also admit that this and no other is the occasion on which this great and much-needed act of mercy has been done. We must also see in the Sonship of the Saviour our own restored sonship, and in our sonship the true and supreme Sonship of Him who has brought us back to the presence of the Father.

The best gifts of earth may be used or abused. Everywhere and always there have been those who

will intrude between man and his Maker, receive only what they choose to receive, and transmit only what they choose to transmit. Be the gift large enough for all mankind, and designed for all; be it originally free as the flowing stream, the falling shower, the glorious sunshine, or the air we breathe, there are those who will intercept, divert, monopolise, and even abuse. As it has ever been with the material gifts of Providence, so it has ever been and ever will be with spiritual gifts, even with the simple declaration of them.

That all may be saved and brought to a knowledge of the truth is a precious doctrine to many, but it is not so appreciated by all. It has a certain ring of popularity. It seems to reduce all to a common level. So differences must be observed or made. The metal is precious, but on that very account it must be stamped with effigies and superscriptions. It must be made not quite so accessible; not quite so easy; not quite so freely circulated. There must be those who have more of it, and have the right of distribution. Above all, it must be invested with some mystery that shall compel the applicant to resort to the negotiator, instead of presuming to seek it at the fountain-head and at the very throne of the Great King, the Father of us all.

Thus has the most comprehensive of all relations been restricted; the openest of invitations recalled; the freest of all gifts neutralised; the simplest of all

messages mystified ; the Divine Sonship hidden ; the Divine Fatherhood forgotten or set at naught. In the place of a living voice set to the key of suffering humanity, and to be recognised by every child of Adam, there has been unrolled before us a scroll of hieroglyphics, meaning anything or nothing at the will of the licensed dealer. Heaven has been darkened that light may be marketable, and the waters of life have been denied that the professional tank may be a profitable store.

This might seem an overdrawn reflection upon any Christian Church or any Christian land. Is it anywhere still unknown, after nineteen centuries of preaching, that there is a Heavenly Father, and that He has sent us His only Son to save our souls ? Are there still anywhere those who hide these happy tidings, and substitute some artificial and costly ware of which themselves are the privileged retailers ? Is salvation distorted to a verbal quibble, and degraded to a pecuniary transaction—indeed, altogether evacuated ? Yet, are we not daily told that there are in our country millions who neither know nor care to know how they are to be saved ?

IX

WHAT SHOULD HE BE?

It is a well-grounded and universal belief that, at what we call the Christian era, the world had arrived at an evident crisis, necessitating, and itself announcing, some great and radical change. There had been no such universal crisis before, nor has there been since. It is so plainly on the face of history that there are not wanting those who explain what came to pass upon the simple ground that it was the natural and spontaneous fulfilment of a general expectation. A philosophic historian observes that Rumour is not always at fault ; it sometimes even does that which it guesses. On this view of the matter, an anticipation, ever so wide and ever so prolonged, would supersede the idea of a Divine intervention, instead of corroborating it. The spiritual King and Saviour of the human race would, in that case, arrive by the simple law of demand and supply. The old state of things had worn itself out, and a new one was necessary. The old deities had been discredited through their not

doing what they had been expected to do, and their places were declared vacant.

But even so, it is admitted, indeed proclaimed on all sides, that the world then required regeneration and reinstitution. It had at once attained its highest possible success and its lowest possible degradation. The arts and sciences, from those that adorn and foster life to those which consolidate States and perpetuate policies, had come to a maturity from which they could not change but to decay. It was the golden age of poetry and philosophy, even though Greece might still more than divide with Rome the honours of the field. The surrounding and ever-threatening mass of barbarism had been crushed and tamed. The whole world was at peace, as it had never been before and has seldom been since.

But all these things that should have been for good turned for ill. Society was everywhere corrupted, all the more from its profound sense of security. The cankers of a long peace disclosed themselves in the palace and in the temple, at the domestic hearth, and, most of all, in the public games which had become the one sacrament of the people. The traditionary faiths and devotions, that had once had a meaning, had now to be explained to those who wished to see some good in them, for they were mostly fables and sinful orgies. A universal deterioration from worse to worse threatened final ruin and extinction. Yet, in the midst of this hollow calm and impending

storm, mankind held firmly to its sense of a Divine origin, a heavenly call and a glorious destiny. It saw, too, how alone the work could ever be done. The great problem of that age remains, in a varied form, the great problem of ours. They asked, Who is this that is to come? We ask, Who is this that has come, and changed the face and order of the world?

Who should come? Should it be a perfectly innocent being? Innocence is nothing; Adam was innocent till he fell. A babe is innocent; an idiot is innocent; a brute is innocent, for he knows no moral law, and can be neither good nor bad. If it is to be an affair of transmission, innocence can only produce innocence, and so begin and end in itself.

Shall it be a good man? To do such a work he must be perfectly good, for the least imperfection will be as the fly in the apothecary's ointment. It will spoil the medicine and break the charm. By that one breach all the ills that infest the world will rush in. He must at least be good beyond all other known goodness. But mankind has long given its own testimony in the form of an invincible prejudice against good men. It much prefers to contemplate them from a distance, and to recognise them when they are gone, and we have nothing more to do with them. Good men are cast in a mould; they behold themselves in a glass, and learn to look good. They cannot help looking down on the less good, enjoying their own superiority over them and insult-

ing them with impossible advice, worthless assistance, and invidious comparisons. They can never feel sympathy with those whom they regard as foes as well as inferiors. They frame to themselves forms of act, word, and deed conveniently suited to their own case or to their own temperament, but quite inapplicable to others less favoured. Not a few good men are hypocrites, knowingly and deliberately. They know they are not so good as they look, but deem it their business to let others find that out if they can. The Bible contains numerous warnings against good men. Noah was a good man ; Lot was a good man ; Isaac was a good man, but what we should call a poor creature. Joseph was a good man, and performed his life's part well, but his descendants became the rebellious and apostate kingdom of Israel. The Pharisee in the parable was a good man, but, unfortunately, conscious of it. The Disciples were good men, and on that very account they had to be warned first of all against hypocrisy.

But even if we suppose a large amount of real goodness, as we happily may in many instances, we may still see with our own eyes how little way it goes to regenerate the world. Goodness has its weaknesses. It supposes people to be capable of high parts and lofty sentiments when they are not, and when they can only fail in the attempt to carry them out. It invites the whole world to a competition in the course of virtue, or what not. It has little heart

for timely correction and wholesome discipline. It is imposed upon by pretenders, trading on its simplicity. The world has long since been agreed that to govern, or to manage difficult affairs of any kind, a person had better not be so very good. He must be of the world if he is ever to manage it.

Then what is to be added to goodness to make it both harmless and powerful, if we would have our second Adam to repair the failure of the first? Possibly it may be suggested to throw in commanding qualities, personal gifts, capacious and subtle intellect, gracious looks and persuasive eloquence, winning ways, much prescience and penetration, poetry, wit and humour, exquisite taste—indeed, all that we admire and love in this world, combined in one paragon of excellence, and then give him for their proper display the most favourable circumstances. Now all this, excessive as it may seem, does not greatly exceed some noted historical examples. The use they made of their extraordinary gifts and opportunities does not warrant us in the supposition that the world might thus have been saved or much bettered. If the holders of these gifts were still to be men, liable to the special temptations incident to such qualities, there would be nothing to save them and the people committed to their charge from utter and shameful wreck.

But even if we add the greatest conceivable intellectual powers to perfect goodness, there remains that

which neither goodness nor intellect is safe against in this world, and which may founder the best-conceived designs in a moment of time. This is the reign of accident and circumstance.

The greatest and most successful man that ever lived, Julius Cæsar, said that luck had a large share in the events of war, and he had often to illustrate this moral. In the sacred narrative several grand and promising careers are suddenly closed by improbable and even ridiculous incidents. But by the supposition before us the work is to be done, and therefore insured from its very inception. Such a being, therefore, as we have described, created for a purpose, must be specially protected from chance and unexpected change. He must himself, also, be conscious of this protection, always able to ask for it and certain to have it—nay, certain to have it whether asked for or not.

X

AUTHORITY

So the regenerator of a fallen and decaying world had to be an authority. Mankind was sick of philosophies, theories, systems, leading ideas, royal roads to excellence, and golden keys of knowledge. All were feeling the want of an authority, a personal authority, the whole man, who it followed must be more than man. Multitudes easily surrendered themselves to authorities, some blindly, some very ignorantly, some critically, improving upon them; some fastidiously exchanging them one for another on very inadequate occasion. But all the world had the sense to see that a philosopher could remain a philosopher without being even a decently good man in any respect; that he could trifle with his social duties as easily as he did with his religious; that he could sell himself to the best paymaster; that he could hawk about his petty wares and supply the article most in request; and finally, that there was very little to change the course of human affairs and reconstruct society in such common merchandise.

But though author after author, school after

school, was discredited, nevertheless authority remained a universal fact, a universal idea, a universal rule of opinion and action, and consequently a universal topic of commendation and of objurgation. Infancy, youth, and the earlier years of manhood must be under authority. States and Churches cannot stand without authority. The greater part of mankind has nothing to do but choose between one authority and another. The orators and writers who declaim against authority invariably end with demanding your implicit, indeed blind, surrender to theirs. Theologians denounce one authority only to put another in its place, with no better claim than the one to be abandoned. If they are driving the poor sheep out of one fold, then, in common sense and common kindness, they must drive them into another. Philosophers write treatises against authority, and invariably inform the reader that the conclusions they have arrived at are now settled and unchangeable, and must be accepted without further inquiry, which would indeed be waste of time. They will even inform their readers that once, long ago, in the embryo stage of their own intelligence, they still hung on the skirts of authority, and under its protection doubted and investigated. They have now discarded all these old-world impediments, and feel themselves the happy possessors of perfect, pure, unalloyed truth, which it remains for mankind to receive at their hands. In fact, they have exploded all other authorities,

and left the world absolutely dependent on their own.

It is plain, then, that we cannot do without authority, and equally plain that we have to select it, if we have the opportunity, and to render to it no blind and servile obedience, unless, indeed, we are really blind and slavish, and so cannot help ourselves. Supposed high authorities have made great mistakes, said very foolish things, and done very wicked things, and we certainly have to take these into account in our estimate of personal character and weight. Should we find other people adopting for their authority personages in whom we can see very great flaws, to which their admirers are blind, that should warn us not to invest our own favourite authorities with an ideal perfection. All this is a matter of common sense. But though moderation and caution be ever so necessary, we certainly cannot do without authority. Three parts of the volumes in the best-selected library hold their ground more by a certain authority than by intrinsic merit. Could they now speak, such would be their respective judgments upon one another. Each succeeding generation does its best to overthrow the authority of the last. Not a name in the long rolls of fame can be mentioned without eliciting a condemnation, a censure, a criticism, or a skit. Well, certainly there is a name or two that an Englishman will be wise to say nothing but good of. For those exceptions special reasons may be given.

But, as a rule, personal authority has not a long or vigorous life in this country. Yet it is impossible to do without authority, and every new generation is swathed, cradled, clothed, and fed in it.

All that is true in the world, and all that is false in the world, and all that is partly true and partly false—untruth founded on truth, and truth with a surrounding or after-growth of error—has come from authority. The incessant clamour against authority proves the fact of its existence, its power, its activity its universality, its hold alike on the barbarous and the civilised, its undying vitality there, its strange resurgence here, its fascination for the wise and good, its tyranny over the common rank of men.

If, then, it be certainly the fact, and proved by universal testimony, differing as it does as to the value of authority, that it is the one pervading rule of human opinion and conduct, we may then ask how the world was ever to be regenerated without the introduction of a perfect authority? If the whole system, habit, and constitution of human society are personal and authoritative, the heavenly intervention, so far as we can venture to say, could only be in the same expected and customary form. It must be some one acting and speaking with evident authority, and declaring himself plainly the saviour, the lawgiver, the spiritual monarch of mankind, and the one mediator between man and his Maker. Could we even imagine it, without such a Person no

philosophic system, no sublime morality, no code of laws surpassing even the Roman Law in its careful adjustment of the claims of justice and mercy, would have had more than a temporary and local effect. It is quite impossible to conceive the world, such as it is, converted and reformed, as it certainly has been, by any number of words and particular demonstrations. There must be a person to do the work, and to be as well as do all that it required. It must be one who would outshine all lesser lights, and himself stand the fierce light beating on him from a continual and universal scrutiny. For every occasion that taxed the ordinary resources of wisdom and patriotism there has always been the demand for a man, with just a hope that a man might be forthcoming. When the whole world was going to wreck, indeed gone to wreck long ago, and unable to save itself, what else could put it again in a right and safe course?

But authority there cannot be, at least it will never be acknowledged as such, unless it boldly and plainly declares itself as authority. Authority must speak to be obeyed. It cannot always be authenticating itself and accommodating itself, its sayings and its doings, to existing notions. In every stage of human life, from the nursery to the largest field of human affairs, authority will do much that has to be taken on its word: as they say, 'The King can do no wrong.' The family must accept the parent, the scholars must accept the master, the flock must accept

the pastor, the people must accept the ruler and the laws, without standing upon every point of difference that may occur ; indeed, without much thinking about it. Authority must put itself well ahead of those who are to be governed or taught. It must even startle and surprise, nay, even scandalise occasionally. That they who are in authority do so is no impeachment of their authority, at least need not be, is implied in the very notion of authority.

So, by all human analogy, we have no right to expect every word and every act of our Lord to be, as they say, such as we think we should say or do ourselves under like circumstances. If He invited His first disciples to quit their avocations and their domestic duties ; if He commanded a rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor ; if He sent a herd of swine into the sea ; if He withered a barren fig-tree with a word ; if He overturned the tables of the money-changers, and lashed the petty traffickers in the Temple ; if He denounced the Scribes and Pharisees and gave a bad name to Herod, He was certainly within His right, and would not otherwise have been taken for what He was. He asserted a Divine authority in the only way intelligible to the people before Him—nay, we may add even ourselves, with all our conceit of a high civilisation. He had to declare and to prove Himself the Son of God, and it cannot be pretended that any one of these words or acts is incompatible with our idea of the Almighty,

whether we derive it from Scripture, or prefer to fall back on the tenor of human affairs. Not a day passes in which a humble and faithful servant of God may not be shocked at the blasphemous comments made, even by respectable people, on the ordinary but undoubted dispensations of Providence ; nor a day in which he will not himself have to say, 'God's will be done.'

XI

CAN TRUTH AND GOODNESS SAVE, REFORM, AND CONSTRUCT?

It may seem an invidious and scarcely religious task to depreciate truth and goodness as saving, regenerative, and constructive powers. It must be confessed the position is paradoxical. The great name of Plato stands in the way. If Truth, in which he included true goodness, should appear, all mankind, he said, would be enamoured with her beauty and flock to her. But Plato was a theorist, a fanciful writer, and very reckless, caring only to attract people to the noblest of studies and pursuits by any promises or expressions that would answer the purpose. No doubt, if pressed on the point, he would have explained that Truth would have to do more than just show herself as a brilliant apparition or representative. Truth would require to have a place and function in human affairs, antecedents, circumstances, a work in hand, and an object in view.

What kind of appearance Plato had in his mind's eye can only be divined. He was surrounded where-

ever he went by a crowd of beautiful apparitions, in statues of unequalled grace and expression, representing all the attributes and personifications of the Deity. But these could not be what he meant and desired, seeing that he longed for something more. What he longed for was fulfilled in Christ, in regard to whom Plato's words have acquired a prophetic significance.

The human mind cannot conceive a moral power without a work, objects, relations, and circumstances. In the Temptation the Saviour was invited to descend, apparently from Heaven, and present Himself to the Jews at one of their great feasts, as their deliverer from the Gentiles. He was to accomplish a certain work, and the Jews were not particular as to the way in which it was to be done; indeed, the first step would probably be the indiscriminate slaughter of every Roman in the country, and all their heathen auxiliaries. Even if we could suppose such an act justified by circumstances, or by Divine authority, it would not be truth and goodness pure and simple. Indeed, there is no such thing.

The best and truest man, supposing such a being, cannot say or do anything except in relation to others, presumably not so good and true as himself, and what he says and does must be in relation to them; that is, he must take them as they are. His estimates will not be always theirs, and he will have to plead necessity or discretion.

If we wish to see what truth and goodness can do by a simple act of self-presentation, without the person, the actual work, the circumstances, and the relations implied in all human action, it is not far to seek. Indeed, the design is an everyday occurrence. Here are people continually talking true and good, and doing nothing, unless it be something to be a very great annoyance, and to be always launching out very small thunderbolts in all directions. Here are books on the good and true, and still you seek in vain to discover the kind of man that is speaking to you; his life and work; how he stands with his neighbour; and whether you could greet him, or he you, as a friend and a brother.

Truth and goodness are established in this country, and are part of the British Constitution. In theory, and in the material accompaniments, it is Christian truth and goodness that is intended in the Church of England. The whole land is parcelled out among Christ's duly-qualified, privileged, and paid representatives. They have to preach truth and goodness, and that not merely in a theological and philosophical form. Each of them has to do a spiritual work and live a saintly life. That is the design of the Establishment, and for this very purpose all the religious orders were abolished and proscribed at the Reformation, as having no proper place in social and national life, and as only representing some superstitious beliefs. Whether they faithfully represented very

truth and very goodness or not, they did not represent faithfully, or at all, the relative duties of the ordinary Englishman, the citizen and the subject. So they were found superfluous and useless, not to say worse, which it is not fair to take on the word of the accusers. The secular clergy remained, and were succeeded by the parochial clergy of the present day, who are supposed to preach and exhibit truth and goodness in proper relation to the actual state of things about them.

When a preacher is independent of his congregation, indifferent to their feelings and their welfare, and only desirous to clear his own conscience or to stand by his order, he can lay down any number of hard and fast lines which will answer these purposes. But if the pastor wish to lead his sheep, and to make them know and love his voice, he will come closer to their hearts, and take them more as they are. This will involve a special and particular form of the good, right, and true ; indeed, to the extent of making truth and goodness relative rather than absolute affairs.

Grant that it is the preacher's duty to lay down the law, whether of truth or of goodness, and to point to the right direction, then it becomes the fault of his flock if they do not attend to the warning. But the preacher is not only a man standing in a pulpit and delivering himself to his flock for half an hour once or twice in the week ; he is also a man living in a parsonage, enjoying an income which is generally

wealth compared with that of most of his hearers, and exhibiting an example of Christian life—un-Christian possibly some of them may think it—to his parish and his neighbours.

The presentation of a man combines everything that he says, does, or seems to say or do. Whatever influence he has is that of the whole man. If any critic of some different party, or school, venture to apply to his case any abstract rules—a few texts, for example—his answer to his own conscience is that he is a member of society, a gentleman, and that he must do as others do about him. Whatever the abstract merits of the case, there is truth—some truth —in the defence. It is everywhere said that a clergyman can do no good unless he be a born gentleman, educated among gentlemen in the society of gentlemen, and having a sufficient income. It is not absolutely and always the case, for undoubtedly many a poor man, and even an ill-educated man, and a man far from polished, or even erudite, can do a good spiritual work. But it is not everybody who can make himself the happy exception to a general rule. In fact, the world is not taught, or governed, or influenced, or much moved by simple truth and goodness. Even if a man felt ever so confident in the power of truth and goodness, and in his own possession of these qualities, he would not dream of trusting entirely to them in the battle of life, and discarding all his present and social advantages.

So here we are in the world, of the world, and labouring more or less to help the world in the process of self-reform. Every one of us works, not independently, but as part of the whole. But he is also working as a member of that Church of Christ which is the new earth rising out of the old earth—a new creation out of the old. If the mixed state of things in the old earth presents difficulties and almost insurmountable obstacles, it cannot be alleged that the new earth, the very kingdom of Heaven, of which we are the favoured citizens, is without them. There are questions and temptations, too, on every side. In fine, it is as much a work to be done as is a battle, or some grand operation of peaceful improvement. There must be a chief, a staff, organisation, distribution of offices, and special instruments. Mere truth and goodness will no more do the work than they could beat a Napoleon at the head of a hundred thousand men, join two seas, or frame an Education Act so as to satisfy all parties. Truth and goodness will not even prepare a field for a wheat crop. They will have to obey orders, and look well that they take them from the right master, the right owner, the right lord, and the right authority.

Thus all experience illustrates, whether in the wide field of the world or at our own doors, that whoever or whatever the Saviour should be, He would have to do more than teach and preach, and, as they say, set an example. He would have to do a great

work for all the world and to all eternity, involving all that is found necessary in civil and military operations, in great industrial enterprises, and in the maintenance of public peace. He must be of the world. In point of fact, there is not a single office of humanity that cannot point to many a sacred text as its best motive and justification.

The world—the outer world—that prefers darkness to light, will insist on its right to the last word. It is that it is tired of Christian truth and goodness, and finds it quite as inoperative as any other code of abstractions. The Sermon on the Mount, it tells us, is read in the Board Schools till the children hate the very sound of it, and make up their minds to be neither good nor true. There must be some truth in the complaint so pathetically urged, and the truth is plain to those who have the heart to see it. Not even can the Sermon on the Mount be separated from the Person, the work, the company, the foundation, the ordained servants, the ordinances with which it is associated.

XII

THE PRINCE OF PEACE

As in this character the Messiah was expected and announced, and in this has been judged and found by His enemies to be wanting, we have to face it. On the one hand, all history is against us; on the other hand, Jesus of Nazareth is still the Prince of Peace to all that believe and obey Him. From the beginning He was to restore peace between man and his Maker. The most beautiful of all the phenomena of Nature, and that which most suggests the descent of Heaven to earth, was declared to be a figure and token of His saving and peace-making power. The chosen family and people had from the first a mission of peace. They had to follow peace over deserts and mountains, through warlike and idolatrous races, avoiding collisions and evil companionship, putting up with the humbler lot, and at last submitting to a long and hard slavery, with almost too servile contentment. Wherever they went they brought peace, even when, as in one instance, it was by a courageous resistance to a formidable conqueror. They consolidated

the internal policy of Egypt, and established enduring relations between it and the whole civilised world. They received and insufficiently discharged a sanguinary commission to destroy the population of Canaan, long doomed for their wickedness, and to take their place, upon the very supposition of an exceptionally Divine government. We have no more right to question the propriety of this act than we have to pronounce on the justice of a plague, an earthquake, a conflagration, or a shipwreck. As little right have we to question every deed of blood recorded by Scripture with exultation and thanksgiving. They received the Promised Land on the very unusual condition that while they were to occupy every inch of it within certain named rivers, mountains, and seas, they were on no account to go beyond ; and in order to bind them more effectually to this fixed and permanent state, each tribe and each family was to be tied for ever to its particular share, however small and inconvenient it might be, and thereby prevented from acquiring more. The Ark, the Tabernacle, a governing and oracular priesthood, a monarchy, a royal tribe, a capital city, a temple, and a succession of prophets were successively the means and pledges of unity and peace. When that could be secured in no other way, a captivity did the work. Except for a very short period, this really bold and warlike people were never the aggressors, and though with more than a hundred miles of coast in their patrimony, never attempted

maritime adventures, except by sharing, simply as merchants, the commercial enterprise of their neighbours. Thus their callings, their institutions, their circumstances, were all for peace, and, on the whole, they might be said to answer the purpose.

Nevertheless, it was not such a peace as should fulfil old prophecy and promise, and itself justify an extraordinary interference in human affairs. The Old Testament, like all other histories, is a history of wars, tumults, seditions, rebellions, palace and dynastic revolutions, outrages of revenge, cupidity and passion, with their consequent train of retributive judgments. The books and the chapters relate wars; a verse or two here and there offers the glimpse of a peace. Such peace as there was can hardly be supposed a blessing in itself, or as fulfilling the promise that the seed of Abraham should be a blessing to all mankind. Captivities and oppressions, not peace, had the chief part in moulding the Jewish character to that invincible obstinacy, tenacity, and firmness which have made them to this day one of the leading factors in human affairs. After a minutely and authentically recorded history of four thousand years, their present condition, though relieved by exceptional instances of fictitious splendour, is, on the whole, pitiable. In some countries they do not even enjoy security, in others a bare toleration.

It has been much the same with the Church of Christ. Its foundation, its promises, its divine gifts,

its ordinances, were all for peace, and on the supposition of such a peace as there should be between all good men, and such as all wise men can maintain with all sorts and conditions. For more than eighteen hundred years the history of the Church, and the history of the world involved in its presence or influence, has been one of almost continual wars, divisions, persecutions, schisms, and controversies persistently carried on with the express design of never coming to a satisfactory conclusion. International peace means the termination of one war and preparation for another; and, in the present state of affairs, the cost of peace is so enormous as to make actual war seem to many the lesser evil, so far as regards the difficulties of the governments and the reluctance of the people to contribute to so unprofitable a purpose. If war brings its violence, its bloodshed, its disorder, its rapine, and its privileged immoralities, peace has its own, and, as some think, a worse crop of evils—'the cankers of a long peace,' as the poet calls them.

But it is not the works of peace, the triumphs of peace, the heroes of peace, the restorative effects of peace, the lifelong struggles of the peacemaker, that fill the pages of history or fire the genius of the poet. Whatever peace may be in the breast of the saint, or in the calm atmosphere of the skies, it is here only a compromise between forces that have yet to run their course, or an arrangement to last as long as it suits everybody's convenience. The Saxon churl

computed that he had lived two centuries or more, having outlived three peaces warranted each to last fifty years.

In the thick of war, with its horrible incidents, its disastrous mishaps coming one upon another, and its enormous cost weighing down the energies of an industrious people for centuries, all wish and pray for peace. The national thanksgiving for peace is the heartiest of all public rejoicings. But scarcely has the grass grown fresh over the grave of the soldier, but a younger generation begins to crave for the openings which it cannot find in home life and peaceful avocations. War may be a sad necessity, but it can never quite fulfil its boasted mission as a supreme arbiter in home affairs. It finally settles nothing. It leaves the legacy of a peace which does but melt in the hands of those who grasp it too closely or press it to their bosom. No—there is a Prince of Peace; but His is not the peace as men give it, or as most men hope for it.

XIII

CRITICISM

THIS is a critical age, and there are those who tell us that if Jesus Christ had appeared in the nineteenth century His words and His works would not have escaped trenchant, and, as they insinuate, fatal criticism. They might as well add that if the world had come into existence in the nineteenth century it would not have been so readily and confidently ascribed to an Almighty Creator as in the rude, uncritical infancy of the human race. But the truth is, criticism has not a decisive and governing place even in secular matters of more than ordinary importance: still less when the scope of the question is beyond human comprehension. In such cases the art has to be pursued for its own sake, as it never can master or exhaust all that has to be taken into account and duly estimated.

In its secular application criticism has been styled the 'gay science,' as if not quite amenable to reason and propriety. A well-known critic of critics noticed that they were generally unsuccessful writers and dis-

appointed politicians. Criticism must, indeed, have its place and function, for there is always matter for it, and matter that requires estimation and classification.

But when criticism is almost the sole occupation of men who presume they have no higher calls upon their serious consideration, and when it demands the whole attention of the world, Church included, to ethnological, philological, linguistic, textual, and alphabetical questions, as if everything depended on them, it leads to that 'cold obstruction' which the poor caitiff in the play saw in the death before him. The world is constituted for those that have to work, and to work as the great Taskmaster places them, not for the few who can decipher MSS., ascertain eras, resuscitate dead languages and long-forgotten races. All honour to those whose lines are cast in those dark and rugged places, and who do their work well; but it is plain that the Kingdom of Heaven has to include a vast multitude who do not enter this way. Even criticism is not all-sufficient or always necessary.

Let the following illustration be taken for what it is worth. John Henry Newman was occasionally charged with want of exact scholarship, owing, it was suggested, to his not having been at a public school. Exact scholarship was then coming up, indeed, it received a fresh impulse and a sacred direction from the so-called 'Movement.' Newman

might or might not be conscious of a deficiency, but he could no more stop to repair it than a soldier, in the thick of the fight, could stop to give his sword a finer edge or a better mettle. The first of his published sermons—not preached, we are told, for the first time in St. Mary's—is said to afford a key to his whole life's work, and in this way to have affected the lives of many thousands, indeed, the religious history of this century. The text, cut as it were with a knife out of the context, was from Hebrews xii. 14: 'Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.'

Let us suppose a preacher of the old school of theology and the new school of scholarship—a painstaking, conscientious man, anxious to do his duty, whatever the result. He would possibly have begun thus:

'Before I enter on the proposed subject of my discourse, it is necessary I should say a few words on the text itself, and throw what light I can upon it. As every scholar is aware, the word rendered by "holiness" in our version does not mean holiness; nor is it easy to say what it does mean. Indeed, the precise meaning of the word, I find upon consideration, would carry me far beyond my present scope, indeed, beyond the text of the epistle. The writer uses the word which properly signifies holiness only four verses before this, and we cannot suppose his object in now using a different word was to avoid the

repetition ; St. Paul, at least, rather affected repetition than avoided it. In our text the word means that process of making holy in which God and man have their respective parts. What that process shall be depends on the particular conception of holiness itself, and therefore on the particular religious dispensation under review, on man's knowledge of the Deity, on the actual institutions before us, and on the specific means to be employed for the promotion of holiness. As there were some differences on these points, not only between the Apostles and their converts, but even between the Apostles themselves, we may suppose that an exhortation to simple holiness might not bear the explicit character attaching to a positive command not to neglect the means of holiness ; and it is observable that in this verse the injunction to follow peace with all men comes first, while sanctification, as we may now venture to translate the word—indeed, have full warrant for so doing—has the second place,' &c. &c.

Almost every clergyman accustomed to sermon-writing could sit down after his household devotions on Saturday evening and write a sermon in this style without seriously encroaching on his night's rest. But would the words have glowed and lived ? Would they have set Oxford and England on fire ? Would they have pierced to the very marrow, and left in the heart itself a sensation never to be got over ? The truth is, the Bible, with its manifold errors of compila-

tion, translation, transcription, and even of computation, lived in the writer as it had in other Englishmen, and every word of it was to him a brand from the burning and a coal from the altar. He would stand upon no order of procedure, logic, or philological reasoning. What possibly was error became undoubtedly truth to him ; what was bitter became sweet ; what was tainted became sound ; the weapon might be faulty, but it had answered its purpose, and at the close of the day he might say with some great generals : 'True, I have made mistakes, but I have won the day, and the field is mine !'

But, in spite of the abuses of criticism, in spite of its excessive place in modern literature, and of its enfeebling effect on the practical as well as on the imaginative powers, it has to be met and it cannot be avoided. It certainly is not possible to enter on the great question before us without some attempt to criticise, to philosophise, and to grammaticise, if there be such a word. Nor is it possible for any honest writer to be quite satisfied with his use of these delicate and dangerous instruments. We cannot quite embrace all the matters to be taken into account, we cannot get rid of ourselves, we cannot quite enter into the minds and meaning of many authorities we would gladly take into counsel, and we have to confess at once that He whom we inquire of is incomprehensible.

If we presume to say that half the world is in serious error and the other half has not found it out,

or cares not whether there be error or not, we are bound to feel it at least possible that we may be ourselves mistaken, or be only flying from one error to fall into another. The conflict of opinions is in a very indeterminate, very airy arena, aloft in the regions of thought upon thought, in continuous whirl and endless succession. Thus, we are judging, estimating authorities, striking balances, giving results, and arriving not so much at a just conclusion as at a fresh starting point founded upon it. This seems necessary to all moral action, to all spiritual improvement, and most of all to any attempt to elevate and clear the mind to a true conception of the highest object of either speculative or devotional regard.

XIV

THEORIES OF EXISTENCE

IN order to a survey of the great question—supposing it to be a question, and not altogether superseded by an unquestioning faith or a dogmatic school—it is necessary to enumerate roughly, it must be said, various theories of existence that have presented themselves to the human mind.

1. One Almighty God, the Creator of all things and the Author of law, but reserving to Himself all freedom of will.

2. One Almighty, sharing freedom of will with certain beings emanating or proceeding from Himself and, though absolutely free, yet absolutely accordant.

3. Such an Almighty as antecedent, and, indeed, actually anterior, to all other beings, intelligent or otherwise.

4. Such an Almighty, however in Himself constituted, imparting free-will to intelligent beings, with various reservations, such as the overruling of that will, or allowing it to work its way, or holding it answerable, whether overruled or not.

5. Any number of deities and spiritual beings, in succession, in gradations, in various forms and relations, not quite finite, yet not quite infinite, including humanity, and tied to earth by various natural and social bonds.

6. Chaos : that is, a universal and eternal confusion of deity, elements, matter, force, law, and free-will, each struggling for the mastery, and incapable of any other extrication than the survival of the strongest.

7. Matter, force, and law, with no other deity than an inscrutable original, not even possessing, certainly not exercising, free-will.

8. Such a constitution with free-will in the hands of the human race, and necessarily exerting a certain antagonism to the uniform operation of law.

9. Such a constitution—that is, matter, force, and law—without the existence of free-will in any supposed deity or any human being, except the particular writer, who sees around him the reign of law, himself only excepted.

10. A confusion of all these ideas, each serving its turn as it is wanted and comes to hand.

Some of these theories might be thought quite untenable, certainly in these days ; but ours is a state of warfare, and the disputant who pursues too eagerly his advantage over one theory may find himself committed to another when he leasts suspects it. Theology is the most difficult of all subjects for a man who

uses his reason to talk and write about. Theologians, therefore, claim not to be amenable to reason—that is, the ordering rules of grammar and logic—and they delight in the discovery of a formula of which they are proud to claim the secret and incommunicable sense.

If it be so even with professed theologians, much more will it be with those who are content to gather from theology and Sacred Writ what will answer the purpose of the hour or raise a passing emotion. For example, people never will get rid of the idea of an unredeemed chaos and of matter still inextricably complicated with evil. They think they may enter upon it as so much waste ground, like the outskirts of our old parishes, in which the borderers and outsiders enjoyed a license often more valuable to them than the tenures of the more civilised and homely villeins and serfs.

So general is the sense of religious failure, or disappointment of reasonable expectation, that anybody who feels called upon to protest, or to mend matters, is apt to begin by securing for himself some coign of vantage in which he can do his difficult work with comparative ease. What most immediately answers this purpose is to take up some doctrine as the one key of saving truth and solution of difficulties: the Divine presence in one particular spot or building, or form, or act, or phrase, enough to raise curiosity, to invite closer adhesion, to foster confidence, and

perhaps lead to better things or something more distinctly in the nature of a reward.

Some readers, more ready to talk, and even to act, than to apply their minds to these matters, will possibly observe that they know little about forms of existence, and have no theories or suppositions on the subject. But it is impossible to say or do anything without a good many suppositions, some of them assumed facts, some of them probabilities, some preferences, wishes, or tastes. The most casual and thoughtless expressions imply theories, not expressly or even quite consciously accepted, but allowed to occupy the ground, and bear their fruit, whatever it may be. All have some idea of the Almighty, even if it be but the sensation raised by the sacred Name—a Name heard only too often in our streets. They may be wholly indifferent to the Name, however invoked. They may only avoid the thought. It may be their habit as well as wish to feel themselves out of His sight and hearing. They may regard Him only as the punisher of certain offences, hardly and sharply defined. They may believe Him a blind partisan, a merciless judge. They may think everything going haphazard about them. But whatever it is that they think and feel, it is the result of habit in continual subjection to the will, and it becomes the basis of all their opinions on sacred subjects, if they ever deem them worth an opinion.

XV

THEISM

THEISM, pure theism, is so grand and simple a faith, and has such foundations in Nature, in history, in morals, and in the older Scriptures, that no Christian can be surprised at many good men having taken their stand on it, and steadily refused to go further. It has been the inner teaching of many great schools of religion and philosophy. The doctrine of One Almighty God is the one point in common to Platonism, Judaism, Romanism, Protestantism, Mohamedanism, and Buddhism. Could we suppose an Œcumenical Council of all the most rational believers in the world, this is the one dogma for which anything to call unanimity could be obtained. All other doctrines either bear the stamp of fiction, and are accepted rather than believed, or are difficult to be preserved free from corruption and fatal variation. To fall back on simple theism seems to many as natural a course as for the intellectual world, on the revival of learning, to have fallen back to first principles, and to the logic of facts, in place of fan-

tastic and groundless theories. Even the Christian must admit that the recognition of the One God Almighty is the very basis of his faith. Natural religion may have been taught to the prejudice of Revelation, and even of Providence, in the sense of a present God interfering in human affairs; but, on the other hand, greater, because more positive, mischief has been done by dealing irreverently with the providential and the miraculous, to the disparagement of the great central article of the world's faith—the Almighty One.

In theory, therefore, this Creed—that is, the One Almighty—might seem amply sufficient; while its absolute truth, as far as it goes, seems to throw a tremendous responsibility on those who add to it. The worshippers of the One Almighty God, standing on their own rectitude of purpose and sincerity of character, urge that nothing more is wanted than to preach the doctrine plainly and illustrate it consistently. What is to be done if people are not true to their creed? It is they who are to blame, not the creed.

But, in matter of fact, this creed never has obtained the undivided and unmixed allegiance of any people for any period of time. From the very infancy of the human family, at the sources and down the streams of the great eastern rivers, the One God has had rivals, Himself the secret of the few, while they have been the devotion of the many. Sun, moon, and

stars, the elemental powers, heroes, ancestors, the creations of poetry, the waifs and strays of tradition, and the casual interjections of the mart, have shared and generally engrossed the regards due from man to his Maker. Even when Heaven showed its strongest hand in the selection, education, and preservation of one family as the favoured custodian of the Divine Truth, it soon reflected with chameleon versatility the hues of every surrounding people and worship, and enveloped the one source of light with a halo of many-coloured inventions. The stoutest champion of Jewish orthodoxy cannot pretend that the chosen race were ever quite true to their creed, or found in it the fulfilment of all their aspirations.

It did not, and could not, satisfy them. It was not designed to satisfy them. It contained in itself the confession—declaration rather—of its own insufficiency. Whatever this pure, simple, and almost unquestionable belief might have been to the few who could bear witness to its first promulgation by the very mouth of the Almighty, it became in a very short time a cold abstract idea, a memory or dream. The apprehension of it became confused and dim, and reason could not restore the legend to form and distinctness. The wonderful volume which records the history of the sublimest of truths, relates with unparalleled candour and fidelity the continual crimes against it, and their tremendous chastisement.

From the beginning, this belief which some tell

us is quite competent to stand on its own sure basis of reason and instinct, came with an escort of hopes, promises, warnings, and sacramental observances. It came with the promise of continual mediation, occasional interventions, assistances, deliverances, restorations, and a grand consummation. If the scanty and broken record does not explicitly contain the whole treasury of golden expectations from the very beginning, the subsequent history unfolds what was at first a mystic roll. From first to last the story of Hebrew Theism was not merely the maintenance of a grand idea with appropriate dignity of worship, but rather of Divine interventions, and of a mediatorial system sufficient for present needs, yet with an ever-unexhausted remainder of significance, pointing to something much grander than anything yet known in the grandest of all national experiences.

A philosopher of the modern school has stated with singular consistency his chief reason for hating the Jews. It is that they are the authors of three religions—presumably the Jewish, the Christian, and the Mahommedan. But these three religions, or rather groups of religious belief, are independent and unquestionable witnesses to the simple truth and the chief facts of the Old Testament history, and also, not in a less degree, to the great fact that within that faith and that history there was bound up much that man would have to interpret, and which he has interpreted, according to his bias, well or ill.

The human mind, if it have any religious instincts at all—and is, in that respect, somewhat better than the brute—craves for communication with the greater, higher, older and more enduring being, or beings, to whom it owes its existence, its great powers, its grand opportunities, and its glorious visions. The Theist invites us to discard all ideas of communication with the Almighty that savour of man's invention, and to be content with that within the reach of any one—communion between the spirit of man and the spirit of his God. Constituted as we are, circumstanced as we are, we desire more; we cannot help it; we do it. The Theist deceives himself if he thinks he is satisfied with this spiritual intercourse between himself and the Almighty. Every thing, every person, every fact, every idea, of a moral character or a religious bearing, intervenes, and these all constitute themselves the great court of hearing, of argument, and of decision in which we are the supplicants, the disputants, or the claimants, as may be. The whole order of Nature, the whole of our lives, all we know and feel, has a mediatorial character and a decisive consequence. We may or may not be content to have it ordered for us, to admit the court to be properly constituted, and to recognise the judge on his seat; but such a court there always is, even if it be one of our own choosing or devising.

The Theists themselves are the foremost witnesses to the unsatisfactory and improbable character of

their own creed. They are ever complaining that, with little exception, the whole practice and belief of the world is, and ever has been, against them. Superstition, mysticism, fanaticism, bigotry, sit like nightmares upon them. They are ever ready to exclaim that all the world has gone astray, all men are liars, the whole world sitteth in darkness. It is plain, therefore, upon their own showing, that the human mind has a natural inclination and capacity for filling up in one way or another the interval between man and the supreme author of his being. Man never ceases to be the babe crying to its parent and stretching out its hands in the direction of the loved voice or features. The Theist would silence the unhappy child with long arguments and lengthening lists of the human follies and crimes for which superstition is answerable. He is only building up to colossal proportions the case against the poverty and barrenness of his own creed. Nay, as memory is consciousness, and a man is that which he knows, he finds his own very self filling up the void between earth and heaven, and himself forcing that conception on the world.

XVI

THE DIFFICULTIES OF THEISM

IT is frequently taken for granted that Theism is a reasonable faith, whereas the faith implied and taught in the Bible does not appeal to pure reason, but to ideas and sentiments outside the province of reason, and conflicting with it. Christians are told they believe what they wish to believe. They choose to believe, and there is an end of the matter. Or they don't really believe; they believe only in a fashion. Such are some of the forms into which a Theist will put his objections, or suspicions, or downright accusations, in full reliance on his own impregnable position.

But the truth is there are immense difficulties in the way of Theism, considered as a positive dogma, and so far entitled to the greatest respect. In matter of fact, it has never yet quite succeeded in establishing the dominion of the One God Almighty over the universe, or even over that part of it which is distinctly and emphatically called the Creation. As to what may be called ancient history, whether profane or sacred, pagan or Christian, it is impossible to name a date when the whole world did not still

regard the greater part of the universe as chaos, or waste material, beyond the reach of light, order, law, and organising power. There was no evident proof of any Divine activity or presence in that vast region, so it was said to be not only reasonable, but pious, to form no opinion about it. Even in this day, very reasonable people and very religious people will frequently speak as if the elements, and, still more, human affairs, were not certainly, or quite, under the control of the Almighty. Luck is still one of the idols, not merely of the market, the port, the forum, and the debating-club, but of the nursery, the school, the boudoir and the drawing-room. No novelist would sell five thousand copies of his next tale if he started with the admission that he was no believer in the blind goddess. He has to supply a succession of suitable or startling incidents, and he looks for them in the most unvisited quarters.

The Almighty must have been from all eternity, or have had a beginning, and the two suppositions are equally inconceivable, except in a certain initial way, sufficient to enable us to say honestly we believe, or not. The boldest intruder into the unvisited and unknown must find reason itself baffled and blunted by the attempt to decide the question on its own grounds. Yet a decision has to be made, and the human will alone can make it. The will may not be conscious of the act, indeed, it seldom is conscious of its acts. It acts by habit, by custom, on

impulse, under pressure, by supposed or accepted necessity, on temptation, upon provocation, in recoil, gregariously, idly, tumultuously, and in many other ways, when it recognises nothing but the fashion, the occasion, the summons, the necessity, or what not, and never thinks there is a will at all in the matter. Yet it must and will do what it does. No Deist was ever suspected of being a man without a will of his own. He is generally proud of his will; and his creed, simple as it is, certainly makes many calls on its independent exercise.

On one most important matter the ordinary Deist and the ordinary Trinitarian stand on an equality. They have both to believe, or not, as they please, the continual interference of the Almighty in human affairs. They have to believe, or not, as they please, in what are called special providences, special warnings, and special calls to special undertakings. They have both to regard accidents as dispensations, or not, at discretion. If they suffer the usual vicissitudes of human life, in soul, body, or estate, their resignation—which, under all circumstances, is the best course—may be to a wise and beneficent Power, knowing and doing what is best for them, or to the cruel and headless divinity of the old Stoics, a being whom it was almost a virtue to hate and denounce.

Putting aside creeds as creeds—spurious creeds, hollow creeds, and what may be called shop-window creeds, made for sale, and with an appropriate trade-

mark, insurmountable difficulties beset any independent thinker resolved not to rest till he has found a perfectly reasonable standpoint in opinion and practice. In order to get rid of an impertinent and intrusive Deity, the materialist will send the critical stage of his evolutionary processes, say, a hundred million years back. With much less consumption of ink and good arithmetic, many an ordinary Trinitarian will put the last miraculous intervention only four figures back, but quite as effectually. If the Deity be really under orders, or engagement, not to intrude in human affairs, and spoil the little games of theologians and philosophers, the date of the denying or self-denying ordinance becomes a matter of idle curiosity.

But there are, nevertheless, other questions which may disturb and bewilder the most pious and reverential believers, wishing to understand as well as believe. How far is the Almighty bound by His own acts? Are his decrees like the laws of the Medes and Persians, never to be changed? In the eternal future, must we include the infinite order and development of an eternal past? Is every human soul to be as it is for ever, be its condition good or bad? The Bible, and, in much less qualified language, the Creeds, tell us that God repenteth not; but the Bible cheerfully and happily relates various instances of His repentance. But there is not a question in the Bible that has not its correlative in the ordinary course of human affairs, and in the open arenas of

philosophic discussion. Both the Deist and the Trinitarian have to leave them alone, or to handle them, as they please. Whenever they do approach these questions and proclaim a decision, it is found in the order and course of natural and habitual proclivity.

The Theist appeals to reason. The appeal is from the fact—that is, the fact of a religion founded on an ideal and sentimental faith, and self-condemned, the Theist says, by its divisions, its follies, and its grosser scandals. But to what is the appeal? There is no such thing as pure reason, like pure mathematics. The reason appealed to does not exist except in its word—that is, its human relations. It may be admitted that no Christian community exhibits such a state of things as there ought to be. But, on the other hand, there does not exist a State in which Theism—simple Theism, is either the religious bond or the prevailing belief, or at all likely to be.

XVII

ABSENCE OF TRUE SONSHIP IN THE OLD FAITHS

IT is written that our first parents, wearied with straight command, humble service, restricted enjoyment, and filial duty, listened readily to an evil suggestion to consult their own tastes and to become 'as gods.' The temptation to which they yielded was that which the same power tried on the second Adam, upon which He spurned the deceitful prize of arrogant equality. From the beginning of the world to the present hour, from one end of the world to the other, under every variety of creed or service, the same temptation has been repeated in its most seductive forms: 'Be as gods, please yourselves, have your own rules of right and wrong, take what you can get, and see whether harm will come of it.' So universal has been, and still is, the temptation, and so universal the pompous surrender or the weak compliance, that in this matter a very few sentences would tell the story of the human race and leave Christendom little to boast of over Paganism, Heathenism, or any religion not entirely diabolic and necessarily evil.

How does it stand in the older forms of faith, as far as it could be called a faith? In the immense pantheon of pagan antiquity there was one place void, one character missing. This was some deity specially and distinctively representing the universal relation of intelligent beings to their Creator and common Father, and, by consequence, their proper relations to one another. Anthropomorphic as the pantheon was, it left out the Beloved Son in whom the Father could be well pleased, and who so did his duty to His Father and to His fellow-heirs of immortality as to be worthy of the title 'God with us.' Those old-world creations of fancy, if not corruptions of older world tradition, were ideal and representative. They stood for elements, for art and science, for qualities, for passions, for industrial occupations, for the civil and military professions, and upon the whole they represented man much as he is and the world much as it is. But there was no one to represent man as he should be, or as his Maker designed him. There was no one to check the lusts of the flesh, the greed of gain, the thirst of power, the vanity of ambition, the madness of revenge, the insolence of folly, the canker of envy and the rot of selfishness. There was no one who, as a perfect man, might be regarded as true son of God.

The result was that, when men looked heavenwards for models and ideas, they only learnt to be gods, not men. They were to be heroes, they were to be good and great, they were to be national deliverers, the

world's benefactors, with the whole earth for their sepulture and history for their monument. Their tale was to be told in achievement, merit, glory, brilliant victories and not less honourable defeats. They were to blaze in the sky as meteors, or in still more abiding splendour. The huge tumulus or the sculptured mausoleum was to leave their names a legend, or a riddle, as might be. As regards the life that is, it was a struggle for pre-eminence and a race for prizes. The warrior, the politician, and the statesman took up the running in succession, and philosophers gave up the pursuit of truth to join in the universal competition for objects more tangible, more appreciable, more easily negotiated, and more certain to be remunerative.

When philosophy did at length venture to chastise the extravagance of superstition, and to separate the chaff from the wheat, it still failed to see in true Sonship the foundation-stone of human society, the first commandment of human life, the leading motive of all goodness, the beginning of all duty to God and to man.

It is a lamentable fact that none of the bright and beautiful ideals of divinity, throwing so much splendour over Greek and Roman literature, and no doubt cheering and brightening the life of those days, is at all worthy of man's heart and soul. There was not a god or a goddess who could command the heart's best affections and the life's service of a good man. There was not one of them a good man would deem

as an honour to be called specially his or her favoured child. There was not one who was not made the central figure of many ridiculous and disgraceful inventions, not believed indeed, but not incompatible with the popular notion of the character thus travestied.

The object of any act of worship, or of a life's devotion to these deities, was to obtain some favour, some success, some accomplishment; not to be better, still less to make others better. No deity was invoked or served to make a man good, for the simple reason that he was not necessarily good himself, or indeed generally good. But he had greatness and power, that is, the power of doing what he might be supposed pleased to do. So, if a man addressed himself to a deity, it was in order that he might, so far, be more like the deity, in being able to do and be what he pleased, and to be accordingly worshipped, feared, or admired. Some love there might be between the deity and the devotee, but it was love of that capricious sort which bad kings bestow on favourites, and which is more self-love than love for any other object. It is quite intelligible why the world in the very highest stage of what may be called self-education, stuck so long and so universally to religions which could not but offend their reason and shock their taste; and which they could not regard as either probable or salutary. These religions allowed them to please themselves, being really of no significance at all or at

least of little significance in any moral question. True, a man might offend the gods, and might find he had better have taken care not to do so ; but that was much the same thing as offending a great man, perhaps by a mere mischance, as the poet Ovid offended one emperor, and the moralist Seneca another, and, much later down, Boethius another.

The old notion of a God was absolute deity in various kinds. There was little indeed to call mutual relation between these deities. One might be a wife, another a messenger, another a cup-bearer, another a son, another a daughter, as in time there was to be after generations of sons and daughters in various degrees ; but each divine individual was in the main an independent character, and had little or no bearing on man's relative duties. This must be said of the mythological family as a whole, for there were exceptions which need not here be dwelt on. As far as such ideas, and such worship, could affect the character of men, they tended to make men wish to be gods, and indeed to be virtually gods to the extent of their chances and their natural gifts. In those days emperors were gods, so were priests, so were poets, so indeed was anybody who felt conscious of a decided superiority over the vulgar herd. The belief did not fail to engender pride, self-will, greediness, sensuality, and a general sense of irresponsibility. Why should a god, sensible of a mysterious, original, and inalienable divinity, debase himself to be either

good or bad. He was answerable only to himself, nor was there any need that he should call himself to account, unless he could thereby hope for some accession of dignity or power.

When we turn to God's own people, nothing that man could suggest was omitted to strengthen, sanctify, and prolong the natural bond of love between the parent and the child. The patriarchal dispensation made descent the title to a grand inheritance and grander promises. The law with promise, and therefore with threats, made the parent the first and highest object of social duty. It made the devolution of estates depend on the ancestral record. How far the chosen race fulfilled the design, and how far it excelled other races in fatherhood and sonship, is told in the closing words of the last of the prophets 'He,' Elijah the prophet, 'shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.'

XVIII

DEFICIENT SENSE OF THE SONSHIP IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

BUT does not the Gospel also invite us to rise, and to partake of the Divine nature? Yes; but not as gods simply and absolutely. It invites us to become once more, and in a more assured way, sons of God. By the example of the true and only Son of God, it encourages and assists us all to become members of a great brotherhood under the help and guidance of the First Born of many brothers. In sonship are comprised, as in the seed or the bud, all the relative virtues—those towards the lower as well as those towards the higher—to superiors, inferiors, and equals.

Divine power itself, apart from all ideas of duty and relation, is now, as of old, an imperfect, unwarranted, and misleading idea. Cramped, cabined, stunted as we are, with innumerable spheres overhead and mysteries all around—with so many wants, such scanty means, and a range of knowledge infinitely surpassing our powers of acquisition—we cannot but feel some craving for divinity. It is the

motive of innumerable myths, cults, superstitions, legends, ecclesiastical pretensions, fables, and fairy-tales. A child, left to itself, will prefer almost any story of witchcraft or *diablerie* to any chapter of the Bible or any page of English history, and will find plenty of elders to commend the choice. But it is plain that, without due correction, such reading must aggravate the dangerous desire to be what we are not and cannot be, and to do what we cannot do and never shall be able to do. What is even worse, it leads to an ill use, because irresponsible and undutiful use, of the means and opportunities actually in our hands, through which we may one day have to feel that we have thrown away our powers and our openings on 'the stuff that dreams are made of.'

Personal ambition and the pride of class find their interest, indeed their sphere, in spiritual privilege and monopoly. They that hold, as they think, the keys of earth and heaven, and who see in a few senseless words an 'open sesame' alike to good society and to the angelic host, can hardly be expected to trouble themselves very much about, or to feel very great concern in, the exclusion, or self-banishment as they regard it, of the untutored and ill-mannered multitude. difficult to deal with and but indifferently grateful. If, upon some unusual appeal to their religious instincts, the commoner sort choose to worship God in a homely way of their own, not invariably in the best taste—and if there arise, in consequence, first a

broad line between the established and the unestablished forms of worship, then numerous subdivisions very injurious to the dignity of the Christian faith—genteel orthodoxy, as it supposes itself, is only too content to see the widening gulf, and to let things take their course, since the people so wish it. And if, from that gloomy depth, there does arise every now and then something more than a petition, even more than a remonstrance, in the form of a direct appeal on the question of religious truth, the ready answer is, What can such people know about Divine mysteries?

From its earliest days the Church was emphatically warned that the Gospel would be a savour of life unto life and of death unto death. Its splendid promises might be accepted, indeed, with contention; its lessons of duty to God or to man, its humility and self-sacrifice, disregarded. In its very excellency would be found the chief of its perils. So is it found here, indeed everywhere. The lofty and aspiring character of our faith, ever aiming to raise man out of the slough in which it finds him and exalt him to the skies, itself has a tendency to make us regard deprivation and degradation as the chief foes of Christianity, the chief impediments to the admission and thorough reception of the Gospel. In this light we come to regard the ignorant, the isolated, the crowded, the overworked, the half-famished, the squalid and ill-favoured, as almost hope-

lessly cut off from the knowledge and hope of salvation. This mass we unhesitatingly call darkness, without form and void

But it is plain, in the very face of the Gospel narrative, that this is not a safe comparative estimate of the dangers besetting different classes. Our Lord and the Apostolic writers dwell even more on the temptations incident to rank, wealth, and education, than on those of the hard-working, hard-faring, ill-cultured multitude. Whether it be an earthly or a spiritual gift, there is a natural tendency to rest content with that use of it which immediately concerns the comfort, the position, and the reputation of the possessor. In that case there ensues a compromise between private use and public claims.

Genius, beauty, rank, position, eloquence, wealth, and fortunate opportunities, are so valuable, it may be said, for home use, that it is folly to stake everything on a remote and doubtful future. Surely we may do what we please with our own? Nevertheless, something ever whispers in our ears that they are not our own, and that we shall have to render account of their use.

So what is the inevitable necessity to which the irresolute child of earth finds himself driven? It is to put religion into an easy, pleasant, graceful, inoffensive form. It is to bring the whole matter of revelation into a nutshell, and to make it as much as possible our own private property, as inconceivable as

possible to those of lower degree, except on such terms as shall not touch our own monopoly and super-eminence. There was little, indeed, in the old religions to chastise the pride of power and wealth, and the still bolder pretensions of wit and beauty. Is there much more in the fashionable religion of these days? Why is it so expensive and so unproductive? Why is the Church as gay as a theatre, while the 'accursed' multitude are in their dark unwholesome caves? Why is the faith of the favoured few so unintelligibly orthodox, and that of the people at large, if they are Christians at all, so intelligible and so simply expressed?

Whether in the dreams of childhood, or in the tumults of youths, or in the serious undertakings of manhood, the craving of the natural man, as St. Paul would call him, is to be as God—not as a son of God, but as God Himself. He sees before him everything that he can possibly desire. If he do but allow his idle gaze or wandering fancy to rest on any object, appetite takes root, grows, and engrosses his nature. But the coveted object flies away. He cannot reach, he cannot grasp, he cannot pursue, and he cannot even continue to enjoy the beatific vision. To win, to hold, to enjoy, to call his own, to utilise, to order, to command, and, within his compass, to have a sufficient kingdom, power, and glory, becomes more or less the dominant idea of a mind created for sonship and brotherhood, but degenerating into fruitless rebellion or unsatisfied selfishness.

Is this a fair account of the world in general? it will be asked. Are the people of average respectability, constituting the congregations of our churches, the victims of this self-deception. Have they selected, indeed helped to invent, a religion expressly devised to separate rich and poor? It must be answered that they are supposed to be educated; they are supposed to know the right sense and proper force of words; they are supposed to read the Bible regularly, and to know something of the history of the Church; they are supposed to be able to compare one creed with another. Even if they rather shun theology, and could not truly say they studied the Scriptures, still they hear them read, for the Church of England has not yet made First and Second Lessons, Epistles and Gospels, so many musical performances. They read, or at least they hear, in singularly impressive and minute detail, the life of One who may be said never to have done anything, or said anything, except with express reference to His Father, as His Father; and yet they sit Sunday after Sunday pronouncing that Father, Son, and Spirit are One God, and denouncing those who will not say as they say.

XIX

THE FATHER

THE story of the Prodigal Son is one of those passages that many a clergyman would rather hear read from the desk, by even an indifferent reader, than have to read himself. If he must read it, he finds he will have to harden himself into a mood of mechanical attention. The poor youth would have his own way, and might possibly have suffered from a hard, unsympathetic brother. However, many have done as he had done, without any excuse. He has now thrown away his place in a good household, the future of an ample patrimony, the kind presence and wholesome counsels of a warm-hearted father, indeed everything he had in the world except his own wretched self. To the remorse that must ever recur at the remembrance of the first fatal step are now added the bitter memories of all that he has suffered at the hands of an evil world, ever pandering to the false tastes and vicious appetites of those who insist upon taking charge of themselves. From good, or bad, company he has descended to a herd of swine; from

a cheerful home to solitary exile. He has lost father, and lost with that the position, rights, honours, and delights of son; and he is now indeed his own master, the lord, companion, and servant of swine. A voice reaches his heart from afar, and he will make the venture, desperate as the case may be. What can he now expect to find? Father he cannot justly hope. Sonship he has renounced and lost. But even service in his native home is better than such freedom as that he has come to. His father sees him afar off, runs to meet him, anticipates his humbly-prepared petition, and at once reinstates him with abundant honours. The brother is found no true brother, because he was not a true son, and did not share his father's generosity. The sequel is an invitation to all the world to return to its lost home, and to share there its lost patrimony, in the bosom of a Father who can never forget a son, or cease to wish him home.

Is it possible that the whole world—ay, a whole Church—should be in so evil a case as this poor wretch, wallowing among his swine, and even envying them the strong tusks with which they could easily munch the hard pods of the caruba? Surely it is only too possible, too likely, when people give up all thought of Father, and all thought of Son, and treat with contempt the thought that the one may be a real father and the other a real son; and when they insult human intelligence, even Heaven itself, with a monstrous conception of a triple Deity, in which

Father and Son are no more than one? The story in the Gospel does not itself introduce the son pleading to the father, and reconciling father and son, for the simple reason that it is the Son Himself who tells the story, and so invites all mankind to come with Him to the Father. What the story does show is the actual and indelible nature of the paternal and filial relations—once a father always a father, once a son always a son—not unfulfilled on earth, but receiving its highest fulfilment in the Gospel invitation.

It may perhaps have occurred to some, ere this, that the story, whether a parable or the narrative of a well-known incident, hardly applies to our days, when few fathers have patrimonies to be shared, and sons have generally to seek their fortunes a long way from home, at some risk of misfortune and ill-companionship, yet without the chance of reinstating themselves by returning to their old home. But if the case be generally one of necessity, and if there be no earthly father to welcome, and no patrimony to be recovered, that only points the moral more directly to the one Almighty Father, the one everlasting home, and the one only Son who conveys the invitation, makes the offer of pardon, pays the forfeit, and joins in the final welcome. We are often told we need not go to a far country, or look into a herd of swine, to find the unhappy, or only too content, prodigal son of our days. He is to be found in dense masses at our very doors. He has no wish to return to any home.

He is satisfied with his company. He has no fortune, it is true, but he is ready to let that matter take its own course, so as he is to have no trouble about it, and no interference with his own ways. If any message is ever to reach a man so foolishly satisfied, or so madly despairing, as the case may be, surely that message must be the voice of Nature, and the voice of God, as He always does speak to man, not an unintelligible conceit of false philosophy.

XX

DIVINE GOODNESS AND HUMAN GOODNESS

It will be asked, Can these be distinguished? There is a common notion that goodness is goodness all over the world, like the precious metal that keeps up its value anywhere. Yet theologians warn us we are not to call God good. What our Lord says may seem to point the other way, but theologians tell us it does not. We are to call no man good, for One only is good, which, they say, evidently implies that we are not to apply the same word indiscriminately to God and to man. The moral attributes of God are not derivative; He has not received them; He is not bound to a prescribed use of them; He is under no responsibility. We are, indeed, bound to study them in order to know, as far as we can, whose we are and whom we serve, but we cannot hope, and ought not even to desire, to satisfy our idle curiosity as to the character and the ways of God. We can apply no common test to the goodness of God and that of man; to the holiness of God and that of man; to the justice of God and that of man; to

Divine love and human love ; to Divine mercy and human mercy.

The most enormous wickednesses recorded in history have been done by men believing themselves to be gods, that is, invested with the authority, dominion, and wisdom of God, and thereby entitled to do whatever they felt a call or a wish to do. 'The king,' they say, 'can do no wrong,' and we certainly do not apply to royal personages the rules we apply freely enough to all of lower rank. They suffer, indeed, with the rest, but not at common hands. Any person, however, accepting the highest place in any system of authority is allowed to plead discretion, and so to bar all controversy. The peace of the world requires it.

The Almighty may and does produce credentials, but He is not bound to satisfy every quibbler. He observes a coherency of design and a continuity of precedent, but he is not bound to illuminate the eyes of those who will not see it. The Almighty rewards and punishes, but He is not bound to satisfy those who expect more of the one and less of the other. Indeed, the capriciousness of the Divine favours, and the indiscriminate cruelty of the Divine vengeance, have been the theme of thousands who thought the facts of the case an overwhelming proof that there is no God, or at least not a God who cares for them. If, then, the question lies between no God at all and a God whose ways are not as man's ways, we have

to accept the latter, and to admit that human goodness is not necessarily Divine, or Divine human, and that man has consequently to find for himself the relative goodness that befits his own position.

Nor can there be any insurmountable difficulty in this, for even in the scale of earthly things all goodness is relative, and takes its colour from circumstances. The goodness of the husband is not that of the wife; the goodness of the parent is not that of the child; the goodness of the ruler is not that of the subject; the goodness of the rich is not that of the poor. In every case the crowning merit is the requisite suitableness of the character for the particular station to be filled and duties to be done. All human intercourse is reciprocal, and the reciprocity consists in the interchange, not of the same commodities, but of different, each contributing that which the other lacks.

But whatever collects men into a brotherhood of action and feeling is allowed to plead its own moral ideas and sentiments against all the rest of the world. The particular society, the class, the profession, the industry, the art, the science, each has its own code, which it quite expects the rest of the world, or the antagonist class, not entirely to like, and often submit to under pressure. There is no need to look across the St. George's Channel and see landlord and tenant utterly irreconcilable. At our own doors, nay, sometimes within our own doors, there will be various

systems of truth and goodness, each with a foundation in circumstances, and perhaps character. What one brother will think very wrong, or very vulgar, or very selfish, or very presumptuous, the other will hold to be quite right, or the only thing possible. If there be some differences about matters of daily life, how much more about affairs of government—how much more on sacred subjects? How can there fail to be differences as to God's dealings with man generally, and His own people, and His own servants? How can we pretend to understand God and His ways, when any two of us may be disagreed upon them, and the most vehement objector may have the most adherents?

But all our relations to one another are summed up in one common relation to our Heavenly Father, and all our relative duties are comprised in one common duty to Him, and are, indeed, the first and foremost part of that duty. We cannot take the place of God, or sit by Him as assessors, advisers, or equals. We may, indeed, enter with boldness into His presence, but it must be as sons. We have to learn from Him what we must do in respect of Him. We must ask from Him what we may give back to Him. We have to discharge every duty as stewards of His gifts, but to consult His wishes and to render an account.

To give us every possible indirect help and guidance in this work, God has sent His Son into the

world, to teach us not to be gods, but sons; and has promised, through His Son, to send the spirit of His Son into the prepared and waiting heart.

The world is familiar with the invitation. It has long heard Wisdom crying in the streets, and it has its answer by heart, so to speak. 'How are we to follow an example professedly divine? How are we to walk in the steps of One who could wield the powers of Omnipotence? How are we to share in a mysterious work wholly beyond our comprehension? We are children of the world. Let us remain wise in our generation. We are all sons, and have no need of a mysterious Sonship inapplicable to human purposes. We need none to show us the Father.' If such an answer to the Gospel invitation is to hold good, it must stand the proof of results, which it certainly does not.

XXI

BELIEF IN PRESENT DEITY UNIVERSAL AND IRREPRESSIBLE

THAT the belief in present deity is universal, and has been so in all ages, is sufficiently known, and has been abundantly deplored. The fact has been the theme of philosophies and poems. If a man can talk of nothing else, and has no other ideas, he can reprobate and denounce all forms, indications, and symptoms of superstition. The attack is so easy, and so flattering to self-esteem, that it is apt to be carried beyond all bounds of reason and common sense, till it loses direction and exhausts itself.

Here, then, is a universal, and therefore natural craving, protested against, and ostentatiously misunderstood by claimants of pure religion, pure philosophy, pure materialism, and anything that calls itself pure, true, and good. It exists, prevails, and triumphs in spite of a universal persecution from all quarters. Man wants access to the Deity. He wants to see Him. He wishes to believe Him specially present at times and places, in services and

ceremonies, in the phenomena of Nature, and in the miracles, as they strike us, of historical development. Man often invokes the Deity, and though he does it in an ill-formed, impulsive, and careless manner, he evidently feels that there is something in it. What people's private prayers are is best known to themselves, but it is absolutely and evidently untrue that there is no knowledge or recognition of God in our overgrown populations.

There are certain yearnings after divinity not confessed, not perceived, by those who most feel them, and which contribute a powerful, because quite undesigned and unintended, testimony to the immense, indeed overpowering, probability of Divine intervention in human affairs. The material philosopher spends a life, his own life and not a few other lives, in the analysis of organic and inorganic matter, animate and inanimate creatures, in hopes to retrace the successive steps of so-called creation, and get behind the very birthplace, cradle, and core of religious fiction. If anybody is safe from that folly, surely the material philosopher is, one might think ; at least, so he thinks himself.

Never was man more mistaken. What, indeed, is the want and work of his life? It is to get at that which is antecedent to all that is known of matter, force, and form.

Man is a metaphysical as well as a physical being. Why is a man a philosopher at all, and why does he

wish to investigate Nature and carry his researches to the furthest possible back, and below, and all around? Why does he feel a pride in the dignity of his work, the grandeur of his discoveries, and the beauty of his systems? Why does he bring into the investigations of science the natural jealousies prevailing between rival politicians, artists, and shopkeepers? Why does he challenge superstition to a stand-up fight, in a fair field, and no favour? Why does he like scepticism and absolute unbelief better than what is called piety, or any form of religion? Why is he careful to explain to any one entering into conversation with him that he does not believe in a God, such as other men believe in—that is, a personal God?

Many such questions might be asked, and no doubt a philosopher would answer them all easily and readily. He would not be worth his salt if he did not find something to say. But he would not apprehend these questions at all, or try to answer them, or come at all within reach of them, if he had not that in his mind which is completely out of the range of matter, and is what Christians mean by 'spiritual.' From first to last he is a spirit contending with spirits. They have their theory, and he has his. One great creative and governing Spirit he will have nothing to say to. It is no concern of his. He is not afraid of it, but feels insulted by the very idea that it can do him good or harm, or is at all likely to do. He wishes to disabuse people of their fond reliance

on this supposed Master Spirit, and what they profess to be their love for it. The labour of his life is to undermine the imaginary defences of the great citadel of life, and explode the venerable imposture. He cannot seriously hope to do this in his own lifetime, but the task is self-recording and yields splendid, if even casual, results. A grand discovery once in a year makes up for the admitted fact that the year brings you not one day nearer the goal. The material philosopher 'never is, but always to be blest.' He takes as much interest in proving that there is no God, or none within reach, as others may in proving the existence, operation, and presence of a personal Deity.

But what is it that constitutes the charm of both employments? It is that they are engaged in a grand inquiry. Both are proudly conscious of success, or what they may deem such. Both believe themselves the world's deliverers from error and guides to truth. But how do they feel it a good thing to inquire, and how came they to hate error, to despise ignorance, and to love truth? The religious controversialist has a very old and intelligible answer to that question. It is that God has done the work we see, and implanted the instincts that we feel. The champion of almighty matter has an answer also, and it is one that takes him a long way back. It is one he has found in a dense atmosphere, and a chaotic mass of embryonic life that might have been

some millions of years ago, when entities had just begun to draw nigh to entities or recoil from them. Let no one think the discovery wholly barren of result. It is a search after truth ; and it testifies to the Deity by showing how far a man may go back and still find himself without such a material account of matter as shall not be the commencement rather than the termination of an ever-beginning inquiry.

But, leaving philosophers for the present, let any one think on the many tastes and preferences of the most unconscious sort, testifying to a certain sense of the Divine footsteps found here or there in our path, and bringing us near to the very Presence Let a man analyse, if he can, his sensation at sight of the Swiss Alps, a cataract, an old tree, a historic ruin, a patch of virgin soil, a protruding lump of granite, a bush of wild roses, honeysuckle, or clematis, a surging sea and a rocky shore, a group of peasantry of any primitive sort, a native, or even a cashier of a Continental bank with his lace ruffles and wristbands. Is he not thrown back further and further, and does he not feel sure that there is a certain changeless reality underlying the present everyday changeful scene ?

Consult the humorists. They will be ready enough to clear themselves from all suspicion of fixed belief, and they are seldom much overawed by the sanctities, however presented to them. But what is their stock-in-trade ? It is one continued protest against all

that good people call worldliness, against pretension, affectation, ostentation, pride, vanity, and everything false in action and sentiment, word, and deed; that is, to teach reality, which the humorist never finds in man, though by supposition it has an existence, and has therefore to be sought elsewhere.

Then what account is to be given of love of archaisms, provincialisms, and semi-idiotic refrains; indeed, the merest sound that will take one out of this our world of artifice and convention? It appears alike in the grand epic, the vulgar ballad, and in the mole-like upheavings of the philologist. What is to be said of that peculiar raciness of expression which constitutes the charm of some talkers and the power of some orators? It is the sense of originality in these cases that seems to take us away from our present surroundings, and bring us so far nearer to the Author of all being. Very often the mere preference for the older word and the aboriginal idea constitutes in itself an appeal to the Almighty—the Ancient of Days.

XXII

PERSONALITY

LET any one consider what is meant by a strong personality, a real character, a personage, a man who commands our attention, our respect, our reverence, or our love, by his activity, his consistency under trials, his firmness, his affectionateness, or his genius.

These are qualities, as we conceive them, that carry us far beyond any limits or ideas of physical existence. When we entertain any corresponding feelings for material objects or the brute creation, as we do abundantly, often indeed excessively, it is because we make these things idols, as it were; that is, the objects of feelings primarily due to corresponding forms of humanity. It is impossible to love or admire Nature without perceiving something beyond it, and thereby recognising an existence, life, and action, quite beyond the reach of either senses or mathematics. No reasonable being has yet attempted to establish fixed and necessary relations between material and moral qualities—for example, to make it

out that Jungfrau, the beauty of the Bernese Oberland, is really a charming young lady, or anything else than a picturesque and graceful mass of rock and snow. No; the very worship we pay almost involuntarily to these magnificent figures points to something in ourselves, but yet far beyond either mountain or man.

Then, in the comparison of one personality with another, how do we all naturally prefer the vivid personality, whatever the cause, whatever the mode of action. The one universal failure of goodness, rectitude, honesty, propriety, and, it must be said, of piety, is its feebleness, its shyness, its indecisive, undemonstrative character. A weak personality, that is, a man who does not stand out in bold relief, and stamp himself upon the mind and memory, is like the half-born creatures fabled to struggle into life out of the mud of the Nile. He may be unexceptionable, and yet next to nothing from an ethical point of view. Evolution is welcome to the poor wretch, if it be content with small and insipid fry.

What is more, there are men who have done great services to their country and to mankind, whom yet it is found difficult to invest with a striking and attractive personality, insomuch that history ignores them as far as it can. The writer once took a world of trouble to force two very considerable benefactors of their country—Cardinal Morton and General Monk—on the notice of loyal and religious

Englishmen, with very scant success. He found that well-informed people knew nothing at all about Cardinal Morton, and very little indeed about General Monk, but had no wish to know more about either of them, and were not the least ashamed to say as much. It must be confessed they are not brilliant personalities, and there is only too much to be said for the prevailing opinion that both the Union of the Roses and the Restoration were spontaneous and inevitable, and that the principal agents were no better than beasts of burden doing the duty imposed upon them by circumstances.

At any time, and on any occasion, it will be found that the British public admires the man who makes a grand demonstration, inflicting bloodshed and ruin all round, even if he utterly fails and pays the last penalty of his overweening self-confidence, while it barely does common justice to the poor drudge who accomplishes all the work without blustering or bloodshed. Such is human nature, the same in all nations, though perhaps this particular feature of it might not have been expected in prosy and common-sense England.

What, then, is this personality? It is the power of filling a certain space, and acquiring a certain hold, in the minds and hearts of men, and thus establishing a sort of empire in them. The stronger, the more vivacious, or the brighter personality, strengthens or weakens, increases or diminishes, improves or impairs

the personalities with which it comes in contact. The appetite for mastery over surrounding personalities shows itself very early indeed, even in the child that will insist on harnessing its playmate, holding the reins, and applying the whip. Such a child will dictate its own games, its own paces, and its own tunes. There can be nothing so good as what it does and says itself. The vigorous, persevering presentment of its own characteristics, manners, and style, establishes child or man as an institution, a standard, and the actual occupant of much otherwise waste or debatable ground. As the appearance of such characters is universal, it must be assumed to be beneficial. Indeed, the mass of humanity would otherwise be left to irresolute weakness, to self-complacent mediocrity, to those that care for nobody, and are not much distressed if others are equally indifferent to them.

We are surrounded by personalities, haunted by them, driven by them, attracted by them, repelled by them. We owe to them our joys and our sorrows, our freedom or our slavery, the direction of our lives, the nature of our faiths, and, in a certain sense, all we are or wish to be. Anybody would find it at least a month's work to write down all the names in his acquaintance—that is, all the names included in his personal knowledge, in his memory, in his reading, and in the discharge of his official duties, with something to call a just and appropriate sketch of their respective characters. Some people will hardly complete

such a catalogue under five figures; some will do it under four; yet every name will raise an emotion of some sort, even if it be slight, feeble, and transient.

Since writing the last paragraph the author has read a sketch of Cardinal Newman, showing a by no means unqualified admiration of that personage. The Cardinal's face is described as haunting the British mind as few faces had ever done; so tender was it, so intent, so sensitive, so searching, so piercing, as if coming into instant contact with the inner nature of every one seeing and seen. Such is the effect of a real and living personality, very accountable in this case. Perhaps the best account of it that could be given is that it consisted in the strength and directness of the moral relations established between one man and another immediately on the interchange of feelings and ideas.

The bulk, that is, the looming of each personality, may depend upon what we call accident, and upon purely material circumstances. It may be just as one man is bigger than another, next door or far away, louder or quieter, eloquent or dummy, good-looking or otherwise, rich or poor, master or man, a great soldier or a policeman, an archbishop or a parish clerk, the author of fifty interesting volumes or unable to write his own name.

Nor is it possible to exclude from the crowd of living memories the creations of poets and novelists, more or less founded on history, more or less probable

or possible. These characters can be analysed, arranged, and classified. They live in us and we live in them; we should be nothing without them. Should any one, likely to be a reader of these lines, happen to be found some day utterly ignorant of such characters as Achilles, Julius Cæsar, Cleopatra, Hamlet, King Lear, or Henry VIII., he would be pronounced fit for an asylum. He has lost his own making, his identity, himself in fact, and is nowhere.

Thus the recognition and appreciation of personalities is a necessity of our conscious existence. We cannot realise ourselves without also realising other beings, and as they all have their several effects upon us, upon our character and fortunes, we have to discriminate, and we do so after a fashion. We know whom we like and whom we do not like, and we should find life very dull, indeed not worth living, if we neither liked nor disliked. But this, which is a necessity of our life and our happiness, is a continual reference to our moral sense, that is, to the spiritual part of our nature. We are always noting, testing, estimating and comparing, sometimes unconsciously, sometimes quite innocently, sometimes, may be, invidiously. But this exercise of what we justly esteem the highest part of our nature never ceases from the hour we know good and evil to that in which we draw our last breath, cast a last glance around us, and for the last time hear the human voice divine.

A time must come, if we live long enough, when

material ideas will become distasteful, dim, and irrational. What are magnitudes, sum-totals, large domains, vast collections, long pedigrees, magnificent edifices, and even prodigious popularity, to a man on the brink of the grave? It is the moral, that is, the metaphysical part of our nature—it is the soul, in the common sense of that word, that deals with the personalities about us, as they are best dealt with, and that through them rises to higher and still higher perceptions of goodness and distinctness of appreciation. Death only stops, if indeed it does stop, this life-long struggle up the steep and rugged path of moral training, and through this pressing crowd of claimants for our moral devotion.

Throughout our lives, though more in early life than in later, we have our preferences, we proclaim our favourites, and even make it a boast that the choice is original, entirely our own, and in spite of time-honoured notions. Surely that which is absolutely necessary in this world, universal, and inseparable from our natures, and constituting the chief part of our life's experience and action, must be for a purpose—not for some casual purpose in the low comedy of our earthly life, but for some higher and more enduring purpose in the after-stage? Through these personalities making so many demands on us, constituting so much to us, and so necessary to our moral development, we must be led up to a Personality that shall be all we have hoped for and dreamt of in this world.

XXIII

IDENTICAL PERSONALITY

PERSONALITY may be called one of the chief teachings of the Bible. No book inculcates so much the importance of individual persons, their real and eternal existence, their relations, their duties to God and to man, their opportunities, their dangers, their inheritances, and their expectations. The Bible stands alone in the unfailing and unmitigated truth with which every person, every act and word, is described. Man, so far as he is man only, estimates personality by the standard of convenience, or some weaker affection. The emperor numbers his subjects in order to know and display his strength. The soldier regards men as food for powder. The manufacturer is apt to regard them as cogs in a wheel, or fuel in his fires. To the contractor they stand for so many square yards of earth to be removed. The author looks on them as readers, the preacher as congregations, the political aspirant as electors, the adventurer as dupes. All of these take man in the general, striking an average, even though they sometimes garnish the figure with

a purple patch to signify the higher grade, and a rag to show that even the lower is not below their consideration. Philanthropists, economists, social reformers, and philosophers of the modern school, all think it beneath the dignity of their office to notice men and women except in units, brought to their present form and bulk by fixed laws which it is their business to wield or to counteract, or possibly even to suspend or determine altogether. Undoubtedly all large operations have a tendency to diminish and degrade the human instrument.

Now what is this personality? It is a very large and multifarious matter in some cases, very slight and simple in the majority. But in all cases it is hard to say where one has to begin or to end. We cannot divest a man of his surroundings, of his earthly tabernacle, of his belongings, his relations, his position, his actual merits, his reputation, his adherents, his millions, or his acres. Indeed, he would himself be the last man to be so estimated. The first thing we do when we are invited to give our confidence to a stranger is to ask for character, friends, antecedents, and previous employment; all of which we regard as part of himself, so far at least that he is not even himself in any practical sense without them.

Personality is diminished, deteriorated, and all but lost in many ways believed by the fond owner to have the contrary effect. It is enfeebled by indulgence in day-dreams, it is wrecked by inordinate desires, it

is shattered by trifles, it is volatilised by desultory pursuits, it is buried under exaggerations, it is borne into space by gusty movements, it becomes as nothing in either a senseless crowd or a soulless solitude. Free-will is a good servant or a bad master. If it be not brought into subjection to a higher law, it exhausts itself in fruitless efforts, in impossible conceptions, or in undertakings that only record how much folly or wickedness could be done by an obscure or happily forgotten man.

As we cannot abandon or diminish our personality except by debasement, so we cannot think of an augmented and perpetuated personality except with much improvement. We suppose, in such a matter, a normal development and growth, that certainly being most in accordance with the Divine operations, as far as continuity is maintained in them and perpetuity can be hoped for. Great changes, indeed, there may be, and metamorphosis is a wide and not unwarranted idea; but we are justified in expecting each new stage to be founded on the last, and to retain the best of all that it had attained to. We have no reason to fear that any really good thing in or about us will be lost in the chance medley of any end or any beginning, as purses and shawls are lost in crowded exits and entrances.

Identity, indeed, is a matter that has sorely vexed metaphysicians and divines. What is it to be the same, aye the same to all eternity, when all that we

see, or imagine, or hope, or fear, is change—change in our belief, consistency, and form, change in our surroundings, change in our occupation, change in our sense, change in Him then in some degree to be revealed to us and to be seen as we are seen? It is an enormous demand, not only on the strength of our reason and our faith, but also on the creative power of our imagination. We can have no difficulty in the conception of a continued identity without the power of action, of speech, of eyesight, of hearing, and with scarce even the power of reflection. A passing ailment may bring us to that state; many of us have been in that state for weeks together. But how are we to identify ourselves without even memory? If we do retain our memory, which we can hardly doubt, what is to be its burden in the ages to come? Our mortal existence presents some clue to that mystery. Some of us, happily, have put away childish things; still more happily, some of us have put away youthful things; and there are even those who can find in old age a release from the maturer passions and occupations of manhood, and who can feel the evening of this life the dawn of another.

But even the decay of our natural faculties, including those of imagination, reason, and, above all, memory, is not without its compensation. Old people find their memory fail most in regard to persons, names, dates, and other circumstances

that perhaps never had more than a superficial hold upon them. They are now and then surprised to find how absolutely they have forgotten something of quite recent occurrence, and cannot even remember whether they have written an intended letter or not. This certainly points to the possibility of our forgetting entirely and for ever much that we should now be glad to forget, if we could only be sure that it was no longer recorded against us. Yet even this, say the poets, lies in the lap of the Great Dispenser.

But whether for time or for eternity, it is impossible for a furnished and cultivated mind not to regard personality, or even identity, as a large and complicated thing: the accumulated fruit of a long husbandry, the living record of much honourable service, a gift out of all proportion to merits, and yet according to the Divine laws of justice and of propriety. In the great company to which we hope one day to be introduced, we shall see, as in a royal court, the Church's 'great and good men,' apostles, saints, and martyrs, in their due order and pre-eminence. Certainly, too, if just expectation is to be fulfilled, we shall see one august Personality, already enthroned in the worship of the Church and in the hearts of all true believers; we shall see Him in His relation to His Father and our Father, to His God and our God, and to all for whom He died and who have accepted the salvation offered them.

XXIV

PERSONALITIES, ABSTRACTIONS, AND GENERALITIES

PERSONALITY consists of the person, his conduct, his qualities, his properties, and all that surrounds him so far as it is inseparably associated with him in our regards. Much of this undergoes change; much may be lost altogether; but even if it cease to be we still take it into our account of a man. The whole is a presentment, a life, and a history, and would always be worth telling if it could only be well and truly told. Persons having a well-defined relation to us, as we have to them, are almost the whole of our companionship in early life, and the most prominent and important in any subsequent stage. We have particular and distinct duties to them; we know much about them; the annals of our life are mixed with theirs; we cannot tell our own story without bringing them in, or theirs without some self-intrusion. Our own whole is incomplete without admitting them to share it, indeed to contribute to it. We have not still to learn much about them; we need not be at

the trouble to ransack our memories. A universal instinct, aided by a Divine command, forbids us to keep account against old friends. Nothing in our present condition can make us forget a past in which the good must ever prevail over the evil. Everybody must be in fault when the machinery of private life goes wrong. Probably no one ever made complaint of domestic discord, households broken up, the oldest friends at variance, without being himself out of court by some gratuitous folly or mischief of his own.

These personalities, and our duties to them, come to us with the enforcement of religion. They are sacred ; there can be no choice about them. In early life we have not the slightest liberty of selection as to our parents, brothers, sisters, tutors, servants, or schoolfellows. We must take them as they come. We are fortunate if we find them loving, apt to teach, well-mannered and agreeable. Still more fortunate are we if, finding some of them not quite equal to the rest in these respects, we are still able to make the best of them, and neutralise the sour of the one with the sweet of the other.

It is only when we have acquired tastes and appetites of our own, and, with them, what we are proud to think strong wills, that we begin to wander in the regions of abstraction and invention ; to imagine characters, to scheme duties, and to create little worlds, in which all shall be to our liking, or at least

turn out well. The less able we are to get on with people as they are, the more easily do we imagine people as they should be, and more distinctly, as well as more easily, what they should not be. These are the personages that speak as they are wound-up to speak in the novels which school-girls find so agreeable a relief after days and days spent upon names, dates, and places, a hundred or so in a page of very small print. Poor things! they can't be blamed, though it may still be a question whether syllabubs are better food than meal with the bran in it.

Between girlhood and womanhood, boyhood and manhood, is the teeming and prolific stage of abstractions that may hold their ground to a life's end, or be forgotten as though they had never been. In the first instance, these abstractions must be on a very small basis, for few boys or girls of twenty have seen enough of the world to form just conceptions of character, in its reality, and in its endless variety. Few, indeed, ever see enough of the world in all its phases of public or private life to know it thoroughly, or to meet all its various demands on their duty, their good sense, and their forbearance. The greater part become what is called narrow-minded, rigorous, tyrannical, and reiterative in their insistence upon certain standards applying to their own particular case, and incapable of application to that of others.

Now it cannot possibly be said, or at least maintained, that Nature and Providence educate men

either for abstract ideas instead of personal realities, or for hard and fast lines in place of charitable forbearance, or for the manufacture of systems instead of dealing with facts. From the child of one year to the nurse of ninety, from the labourer's child to the head of a Government, every human being has to deal with his fellow-creatures as he finds them. He will have his own likes and his own dislikes, but he has also his duties, which will often compel some restraint upon both these affections. He is not allowed to like as much as he would wish, or to dislike either.

All this points to the observation and study of character as exhibited in actual persons, and as against the notions derived from 'good books,' story-books, and all books dealing with fictitious personages. It will be said that few people have the gift of observation, and still fewer a mind for study of any kind. But these powers, habits rather, come in the lines of duty and in the course of Nature. Be it man or beast, you must have some love for every creature, and a disposition to humour it as far as possible, if you would thoroughly learn its ways. Serve it a little that you may be its master ever after. You have to get at the heart before you can be sure of the limbs. It is not uncommon to find in every walk of life very simple persons, of little or no education, credited with a singular perception of character, and seemingly able by instinct to take the very measure

of everybody they have to deal with. Who and what kind of people are they? How have they acquired this talent? They are not the satirical gentry, always for depreciation. They may not be high-fliers in religion or of a high moral standard. They may never open a book. They are gentle, easy, and rather compliant than otherwise—apt to hide their light under a bushel, and, in a very quiet way, to be all things to all men. The secret of their power, such as it is, lies in their approaching everyone with a design to mutual satisfaction, instead of presenting at once a foregone determination to have everything their own way, and to gratify themselves at any cost to the interest, comfort and character of those they are dealing with. They who are always looking for a gain or a victory will never acquire the knowledge of others or even of themselves.

XXV

COMPETING PERSONALITIES

It has been observed above that, according to circumstances, a man may easily be able to recognise a thousand, or even ten thousand, personalities, seen, heard, or read of, but holding their respective places in his mind. By far the greater part of these will have very little bearing on the moral part of his own nature, but there will be many that have some real hold on him, and there will certainly be a few names that have a strong hold, and that help to make him what he is.

All these personalities, as we are variously engaged with them, or associating with them, or as they occasionally recur to the memory, compete, so to speak, in the formation of our own character. Unless we have true wills of our own, high principles, and fixed rules of conduct, we are at the mercy of these personalities. As the evolutionists express it, we then follow the law of the strongest or of the fittest; that is, we submit to embody in our own natures the personal characteristics most to our taste. To say that we

cannot help ourselves is to abandon ourselves at once to the cruel and impious thraldom of necessitarianism. We can help ourselves, but many of us do not, perhaps none as much as they should do. With regard to all these objects, recurring at shorter or longer intervals, there is one strongly-marked line of difference. With some of these we are actually living and working, and discharging positive obligations. The better we do our duties in the narrow sphere, the less shall we feel the impact or the seduction of images or ideas presenting themselves from the wider field, and the better shall we be able to subject them to a calm and reasonable review.

That personalities should be described as competing, that is, contending for place and influence, will seem strange to those who regard them only as the lifeless images or picturesque figures of persons far away or long since departed. But if they cannot be said to compete themselves, there are those who compete most vigorously and most successfully in their behalf, and are always ready to bring to the front their own array of witnesses and drive another to the rear. The saints of the Church—good, bad, or indifferent alike—have long ago been expelled from our own popular education and literature, and now, under the provisions of the Public Elementary School Act, the saints of the Bible—patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and Christ Himself—have followed them, to make room for matter expected to be really useful,

and personages not so prepossessing and prejudicial. But even if the personal element made no appearance within the four walls of the Board School, it is abundantly supplied from other quarters, in a way to leave the children to select their own heroes, their own principles, their own tastes, and their own consequent life careers.

The different schools in religion, in politics, in philosophy, in art, have their grand personalities, to which the lesser members of the school cling as little children to their parents, as soldiers to their comrades, as sailors to their ships. What they find in regard to a few score, or a few hundred, is undoubtedly true with regard to the whole human race. No two personalities have been the same, that is, quite like one another. Everybody is unique. Everybody has a separate calling, a distinct function, his own place, his own way of viewing persons and things, his own right of private judgment, and in these ways much that he cannot communicate to others or share with them.

This is true of everyone's circumstances as well as of his nature, for no two persons have been placed in exactly the same position and with perfectly like surroundings. Twins are proverbially unlike in character, and they start accordingly with a most important difference in their surroundings. Jacob entered life with Esau for his brother, and Esau entered life with Jacob for his brother, and their

mutual antagonism could not but aggravate the original difference of character, contributing to make each one that which he grew into. People cannot but be conscious of this important truth in their condition. In general they feel some pride in it and found some claims upon it. They know best what they are. They know best what they ought to do. They know best the excuses to be made for them. They know best how ill they have been used by man or by circumstances. They certainly have a right to their own opinions, and their own rules of action, so as they do not encroach on the rights of their neighbours.

The one most lamentable omission that people generally make in the use and application of this singularity in their character and circumstances, is that they fail to see in it a call to distinct, close, and personal communion with their Maker. Whatever they are by birth and original circumstances, it is He who has made them what they are, and placed them where they are. Even when, by the exercise of free-will, they have themselves formed anew their own character, and made much of their own circumstances, as they flatter themselves, still, all that comes to them accidentally and unexpectedly, and that may be accounted good or ill fortune, must be from the Almighty, and can be referred to no other source.

But while we all recognise our own distinct personality, and in these days are continually urged to do so, and while we are equally urged to use

severally our special influence upon others, it certainly is advisable to review occasionally the personalities most influencing ourselves, or occupying the largest share in our memory, and possibly even our affections. This is the very useful work of philosophic historians and biographers. Plutarch attempted something of the kind in his parallels, but he could easily be improved upon. We are improving, not only on that very gossiping and inaccurate writer, but even on authorities of keener intellect and sounder judgment. Ours is an analytical age and rather iconoclastic; and certainly the old Pantheon, human as well as divine, wanted some sifting, as well as more reasonable illustrations.

But while we are trying to get at the mote in the heathen eye, what about the beam in the Christian's? It is a grave question whether the Church of all ages, and the Anglican Church in particular, have not gone as wild in their selection of heroes, models, and leaders as the ancients.

The Middle Ages, that we credit with so much darkness, so much folly, and so much weakness, certainly combined in a striking fashion all the incidents and disorders of disintegration and reorganisation. The agonies of death and of birth were never so intermixed. Never was there so much doing and undoing, such frantic efforts to build again in the waste places—never such triumphs, never such blunders. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of those centuries was the sudden appearance of great names, summon-

ing the human race to great movements and to the inauguration of great causes. There was no other way of emerging out of the universal wreck than to follow the lead of the best, the boldest, the most inventive, and the most self-reliant or autocratic. That the leaders thus presenting themselves out of the moral and political chaos frequently abused the unbounded trust reposed in them was likely enough and common enough.

Every Fellow of Oriel, founded in the last year of Edward II., will remember that the founder of the college speaks of all things as manifestly tending 'not to be,' and also warns the members of the college not to fall into *obsequium alicujus*, or the following of any man, there being evidently in those days as many men ready to take the lead as there are now. Even they who are so fortunate as not to be liable to entire absorption and extinction in a personal following, have yet to reconsider from time to time the examples and authorities most forming their own course and character. At least, if they don't, they will certainly live to rue it.

But a warning not to be too ready to follow the lead of those who are too ready to take it does not conclude the question. It only directs us to remember that we are ourselves answerable, and that we cannot throw our own personal responsibility on those who aver themselves ready to discharge us of it by undertaking it themselves. To most people a

lead of some sort is a necessity, for they are simply incapable of progress, or action, or holding their ground, without it. Others are capable of movement, and inclined to it, but certain to go astray. So leaders are wanted. We have to contend with leagued movements, and we are individually no more a match for them than untrained citizens or guerillas are for disciplined, well-equipped, and well-commanded armies.

The conclusion is that, as our own personalities are good for something, but not for all we have to do or wish to do, we have to consider well what lead to follow, and how far we shall follow the lead, guarding against insulation on the one hand, and absorption on the other. The experience of late movements abundantly illustrates the wisdom of those who were careful to retain their independence, even while acknowledging the general merits of the leaders of the cause to which they rendered what they felt to be due. Nor can any other result be expected. A quick and unreserved compliance is sure to react on the man to whom it is conceded. He ceases to respect those who can no longer call their souls their own. He can learn nothing from them, certainly not the cardinal virtues of self-respect, self-possession, and self-control. He can only learn from them the precipitate zeal of which he has already too much, and he only robs them of their personality to the damage of his own.

XXVI

VARIOUS PERSONALITIES

THERE is an inevitable communion and mutual indwelling between all those who like or admire one another. Even the departed, the ancient, they of other tongues or other faiths, live in us and we in them. So deep-rooted are these implantations that an ordinary scholar will find it difficult to imagine existence without memories of Homer, the Greek Plays, Virgil, and Horace. He would require a great deal of unmaking before he could be so expurgated, even if that were sufficient, and if transmutation be not the more likely change. A Christian cannot but feel sure that he will carry with him to all eternity some memory, and indeed some influence, of the chief saints in the Bible, as well as those in his Church, however universal, however local. What can he be without them?

But not to cast a too anxious and too curious gaze on a mysterious future, here we are, peopled and filled, yet living, glowing, and thriving, on the spiritual presence, words, and works of personages, now virtually

forming parts of ourselves. Happily our nature and education, and what is left of our mental independence, has prescribed limitations to most of these personalities, whether sacred or profane, and defined their range in our own minds. We have no wish to commit great crimes, to found empires, to give our name to heresies or schisms, to impark counties, to fill harems, or to build palaces. We do not aspire to leave our name on dark continents, tempestuous seas, or fifty battle-fields. We can marvel at the great achievements of science without sharing the genius of the discoverers or envying their labours. We can thank the lexicographer for his timely aid, shut up his book, and bid him good-bye till we want him again. We can enjoy the humorist for a quarter of an hour, and then think him a cynic, and be ready to believe him a pariah. We can read of a dreadful scandal filling the public mind, and bestow a malison on the perpetrators. Moreover, beyond our own personal acquaintances, personal images are dim, indistinct, refracted, and uncertain.

Nevertheless, it cannot be a wholesome state of things if this sensitive, capricious, and highly judicial consciousness of ours, given us for such noble and everlasting work, should be employed on matters concerning which the best thing that can be said is that they cannot do us either good or harm, and are easily forgotten. The truth is, all this neutral matter is as the rock and weeds and tread of man that

bury, smother, or crush the seed of a better harvest. Made as we are, placed as we are, we must make a choice between good and evil, and cultivate by reading, if not otherwise, the acquaintance of those who may contribute always to that which is best in men and things. Happily, they whose lot is cast in private life, and to whom 'society' is but a name, have one great advantage over those whose chief title is to be men of the world: they are not obliged to be on free and easy terms with everybody placed next to them for a couple of hours, or taking the lead of conversation in a fashionable drawing-room. They are not compelled now and then to hear the Almighty proclaimed, outlawed, and a price put upon His head, and not a word allowed to be said for Him. They can select their books, their subjects, their maxims of science, their grounds of belief, and their rules of conduct, without eliciting a sneer or a more savage denunciation.

Not but that the solitary scholar, the merest hermit of literature, will find that he cannot always be as select as he wishes. He would, indeed, be hindered in the race if he attempted to restrict his reading to works on which he has already written his *imprimatur*. If he really wishes to understand or to answer questions, he must consult those who have raised them, and treat them as they are put by the querist, whom he may find perhaps too strong for him, perhaps also too agreeable.

The comparative import of all these personalities, frequenting, haunting, and possessing our minds, is a serious question, suggestive of some paradoxes. Each of them represents the development and influence of a human being in our own mental atmosphere. Their spiritual significance is not always in proportion to their dimensions, their semblance of life, their beauty, or their intellectual grandeur. After giving them the full of our admiration, our astonishment, we may still ask what are they to us, or we to them. On the other hand, a person may be utterly unimportant, unplaced, and unknown in the world's estimate, or known only as a shred of a man, an uncouth creature, a half-saved clown or madcap, a man incapable of taking care of himself, a simpleton ever wasting himself and his substance on those who cannot even thank him, or a mere unit of the crowd, accidentally brought within the focus of one's careless regards—and yet be found to exercise a most potent influence on men's thoughts, character, and whole career.

Spiritual toxology, whether for poisoning or for healing, deals with small quantities, strange forms, and various applications. You may be poisoned, or cured, without knowing how it is done, where the infection was taken, the pestilent air breathed, or the water of death imbibed. We have to be always on our guard. Happily, most of us are preserved not so much by the use of preventive measures, as by sheer stupidity. So far, happy indeed are they who can read any book,

mix in any company, walk through any picture-gallery, or hear any conversation, and not be a bit the worse for it, even though not the better.

But it is the life and work of the world, not its sleep or its death, that we are now concerned with. All are more or less susceptible; some very susceptible, and they not the worst or the least useful. It is within most people's experience that a face, a form, a momentary expression, a quick movement, a tone, be it only a monosyllable, or the slightest approach to a smile, has made or unmade the man who, but for half a second, saw, heard, or felt it. There are people who never forget what has once touched the heart, or whatever does duty for the heart in such passing affairs.

It is not so general or so frequent an experience that even the expression of a saintly face in a picture has had lifelong consequences, and perhaps determined a career. But it certainly is an experience, notwithstanding some very stout assertions to the contrary, that the expression, say, of loving resignation, or of patience, or of endurance, or of sweet solicitude, in a good picture, has become an abiding presence and done the work of a living and faithful monitor.

First in importance, if not in number or in appearance, are the personalities whom we have not sought, and, so far, are not responsible for. These are our companions in the nursery, in the more

developed household, in the school, in the college, in all the earlier work of our lives, before we are wholly emancipated from tutors and governors. If young people did but know the deep foundations they are laying, the edifices they are raising, by their behaviour to one another in boyhood and girlhood, and in the discharge of their private obligations to their parents! If they did but know at the time!—for they will know one day, even if they then know it in vain!

Everybody who has passed through the usual course of education in this country must have witnessed several times the almost mathematical certainty with which similar personalities, or what are commonly called characters, gravitate to one another. Within two or three days of a boy's entrance into the school or the college he finds his congenial circle, and remains in it to the end. The only exceptions at all likely to occur are due to the natural, at least general, anxiety of parents to find their children making friends likely to advance them in position and opportunities. The parent hears of lads, or young men, of county families, or the sons of men holding high position in society, in Church, or in State. This is the empyrean to which all Englishmen aspire. These are the avenues to all that we most value. It is a reasonable conclusion that sons are like their parents, or of the same metal. The dutiful and much-believing child or youth goes to the school or the college, as may be, makes some feeble advances on

the paternal lines, or makes the most of advances supposed to be made—all to be undone in a very short time, not without trouble or mishap, when the child becomes better acquainted than the parent with the true state of affairs.

We commonly and most justly deem it a question of great importance what society we are likely to find in any place, or for any time, we may bind ourselves to. We may find people sure to lead us a life of antagonism. Some may be engrossing or tyrannical, some stupid, some disagreeable, some only too agreeable in their own way. But it is a long list, and one that most people can easily make for themselves.

Indeed, people do very easily and very lightly classify characters. Almost any schoolgirl in these days can write a tale, in which she introduces personages who, as she supposes, act and speak by laws and habits of their own. They act as she makes them act, and speak as she makes them speak ; and so they fall easily into her hands, and she wins the game of life. She easily persuades herself that she will be everywhere master of the field, and has only to come, see, and win. Little does she know how little she can do, and how much she will have to suffer in every stage of real life, from the fashionable quarter of a metropolis or a county, down to the humblest rural vicarage or the dullest market-town.

Premising that it is the greatest benefit to us to become acquainted with varieties of character, and

to learn how to deal with them, and that it is the appointed way, and the only way, in which we can ourselves ascend to a high character, or avoid sinking to a very low level, it may be as well to point out to the tyro in these matters what it costs a Christian to become—in a good sense, that is, without the loss of his very self—a man of the world. He will have to allow characters of the sort that he has long regarded with natural and unaffected disgust to infest his mind and memory, to present themselves in season and out of season, night and day, in solitude and in company, dictating to him when he wishes to be free, interrupting him when he sees his own way and wishes to pursue it, insisting on false rules of judgment, and jarring against his notions of propriety and good taste, putting the wrong words on the tip of his tongue, lying in wait to catch him tripping, and rejoicing to find him in difficulties. All this a man has to suffer who has not selected properly what may be called his spiritual company, the personages whom memory ever recalls, however uncalled for—or who, indeed, has exercised no selection, but has simply left it all to chance work.

XXVII

MULTIPLE EXISTENCE

THE first comment suggested by this heading will probably be that there is no such thing. A man is one, not several. He may be surrounded by the echoes and reflections of himself; he may be refracted through various media. He has his effects; but he remains an individual—himself, and nobody else. Two can have their two selves, but one only one; this 'runs,' as they say. It is easy logic—that is, easy assumption. But, strange to say, this absolute oneness is just what all people with any command over their own occupations and circumstances are always flying from. With no reason, unless it be a sort of instinct, they are ready at a day's notice to fly as quick and as far as steam will carry them, for an indefinite period, to a strange place, to new friends, new duties, new plans, a new world indeed—all of these constituting a new being and a new form of existence.

If they made it the condition of any change that it should be the natural outcome and just conse-

quence of the existing state and circumstances, that would be an attempt to save moral unity. But it is often found that the one indispensable condition of a change is that it shall be to something quite unknown and unaccustomed, except as it has been heard or read of. The very people who would shrink with horror from the thought of suicide, and who perhaps do not reflect on the certainty of death as often or as cheerfully as they ought, are ready at a day's notice to precipitate themselves into a change which shall incidentally deprive them of half their spiritual relations. Nor do they contemplate with any dread or misgiving the doubling, trebling, indefinite multiplication of the matters contributing to virtual identity. If all this be natural and sanctioned by universal use, surely it throws some light on the possibilities of the future.

To the world generally outside of Revelation the idea of multiple existence has been not only easy but inevitable and universal. The people, the priests, the poets, and even the philosophers, have imagined beings more or less human, more or less divine, who could exist at once in different places, different forms, different occupations. With some deities this was a permanent condition, with others occasional, temporary, and for particular purposes. The stories themselves may not be worth very much; indeed, there are few books less read now than Ovid's 'Metamorphoses.' But it is plain that the human

mind has an ample capacity and something like a special instinct for conceiving conditions of existence very different from those of actual life, and for seeing that life itself in very different aspects.

The child very soon enters into the spiritual nature of other human beings, and admits them into its own. They are soon dependent on one another for what has become their respective spiritual integrity or whole. If they become unacquainted with one another, or forgetful, we conclude that one at least is idiotic. Every step in the higher cultivation of the heart, as of the mind, leads people to realise a future state in which the relations of their own actual lives will have a large, a sentient, and an active part. Good Christians generally expect individuality to be modified, and identity rather sustained than impaired, by long partaking of one another's nature, and so forming a whole. The idea of taking a place at once in a celestial congregation, among myriads of figures one can know nothing about, each wearing a crown, holding a palm, and repeating the same words for ever and ever, finds favour only with the uncultured children of toil, whose only idea of happiness is rest, who are accustomed to monotony, who are suspicious of strangers, jealous of innovation, and averse to any great strain on the intellectual faculties. But even these children of Nature, when they are put to the proof, betray some longings for the perpetuation of sweet earthly ties. There can be

no bounds to the range and objects of this sentiment, for if it be once admitted that a good child will never cease to love its parents either in this world or in the next, and that in this way, and to this degree, the relation of father and child is indissoluble, then it follows that her present Majesty will continue to reign in the hearts of all her loyal subjects to all eternity. Indeed, in the course of ages there must arrive a time when it will be said with a sufficient approximation to the truth that she always did.

In this world, of course, it is absolutely impossible to regard any man in his mere individuality, apart from the persons and things he has been concerned with. There can be no such thing as an abstract judgment on a man. The judgment is on the doer of the deed, and that involves a judgment on other persons and things. People who don't wish to think about the matter at all, and who will not realise the omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence of God, wish the soul to carry away from this earth as little as possible, and do not see how it can be encumbered with poor earthly gear. But this whole matter is with the Almighty, who knows everything and does everything, excepting only as regards the freedom of will He has granted to us. No limits, therefore, can be assigned to that of this world that we carry to another, or to the affairs of time that shall continue for eternity, or to the multiplicity and variety of relations which may contribute to the

perfection and activity of the eternal soul. No doubt many a man will not be eager to embrace a belief that his family, his parishioners, his creditors, his associates, his victims, or his dupes, will be found at his heels throughout the ages, after he wings his flight ever so far; still less will he be ready to believe they will become part of himself, subordinate vitalities in his own body corporate. But it would be at least wise for such a man to remember that for every wrong word spoken or deed done in this world an account will have to be given, with an eternal judgment to follow.

Not a few of the beings thus intimately associated with a man's own being occupy so large and so vital a part in it that he can no longer feel himself the same without them. A man would not be human, and certainly not angelic, who could think with pleasure of an eternity without sight, sound, sensation, or remembrance of father, mother, brother, sister, wife, children, or dear friend. They have become part of himself, as he of them.

It will be observed upon this that, nevertheless, and whatever change or separation, or accretion, a man may undergo, he will still be one, and one alone. He will still recognise his own absolute singleness. His intellectual part will comprise any number of objects new or old, and his soul retain its filial, conjugal, parental affections, with no diminution or disparagement of his old identity. He could even suppose

himself styled son, brother, husband, father—as having all the knowledge, all the ideas, and all the sentiments proper to those relations—and yet be self, and self alone.

Could we suppose the soul of man in a future state in some perplexity—as even a soul may feel—and conceiving the strange idea that it was indeed composed of all the persons with whom its existence had ever been associated, surely such a bewilderment would be immediately dispelled by the sight of the persons themselves.

There is not even any occasion to distinguish between the present and the future in this matter. We have only to conclude, on the very ground of experience, that we shall be as we are. In fact, we are, in a great measure, composed of those around us, or within our active experience, and in spiritual communion with us. They are in us with no loss to their own distinct existence. In many respects they and we are as one—indeed, really one—be we ever so many; yet we remain distinct persons and in different relations to one another. In the life that is we are not only distinct, but also very different; but yet, if Christ's words be fulfilled in us, we shall be one with Him and with one another.

XXVIII

VARIOUS EXISTENCES

ALL things and all persons exist both as they really are and as they seem to be, or are conceived to be. We are, indeed, sufficiently aware of the fact to dwell much upon it when it serves our purpose. Literature, especially that of the imaginative and inventive kind, is largely made up of the various conceptions that nation has of nation, race of race, moderns of ancients, the poor of the rich, the rich of the poor, town of the country, parents of children, children of parents, trade of gentility, gentility of trade, the ignorant of everything out of their daily beat, the bookworm of public life, the recluse of the man of the world, all the professions have of one another. Indeed, in one household everybody exists simply, and also as he stands in the understandings around him ; and there are persons who are said especially to be misunderstood, which certainly argues something impenetrable or delusive in their natures.

A great place in the world means a proper, true, and distinct place in the minds of a great number of

people ; and no one can have such a place except on reciprocal terms—that is, he must understand rightly and conceive rightly, if he would be rightly understood and conceived in return. This last process requires a life of self-sacrifice which few people have heart for. Life they feel to be hardly worth living, and its prizes not worth the training for, if it is to be spent in finding out what people are and wish, and what notions they have of things. Condescension they would admit to be graceful now and then, indeed a pretty and sometimes profitable exhibition ; but condescension to everybody, even to those you hate or despise, seems so unnatural that it can hardly be urged upon any one with the least sense of what is due to himself.

Certainly, no one can answer for a man who lives alone in the universe, or does his best to be alone, by surrounding himself with the pale reflections of himself, moving as he pulls a wire or winds up a spring, or supplies them with fuel, food, or electric force. Such a being—and there are many of one sort or another—is himself sure to be misconceived, for he has a little world of his own, and it is out of relation or correspondence with the world without. But that is an excess which need not here be dwelt on. The main fact is, that in all matters there is the truth which God alone can see, and its seemings, for they are apt to many, in the mind of man.

But these very seemings, these conceptions and

misconceptions, these current or volatile appearances, long cherished or hastily accepted, and to be as soon forgotten, are all the work of the Almighty, as present in our hearts as anywhere else, in His dealings with us for our good.

What the Almighty is no man hath seen, nor can see, but He makes a continual revelation of Himself to us—that is, to every intelligent being—through our own medium, and always as true as our own love of truth will allow. There is, and must be, a continual difference, indeed conflict, between our first simple ideas of the Divine Being, should they survive the days of our simplicity, and the ideas that are the outcome of our lives, of our own exercise of free-will and our own use of our reasoning faculties. Whether we have obeyed God, speaking to us continually through our conscience, or rebelled ; whether we have sought Him or fled from Him ; whether we have testified to Him or denied Him—of all this good or evil there will be a record in our own soul, and in that record will be writ our own knowledge or ignorance of God.

Perfect consistency there must be in all the manifestations and revelations of the Deity—it would be impious to doubt it—but it does not follow that we are capable of realising it. Nor does it follow that the Deity shall always be presented to us in the same light. Much has been written about the different aspects in which the Lord appears in the succes-

sive stages of the Jewish Dispensation. Both the annals and the devotions of the elder Church have been made to countenance changes in belief, as if opinions were all we had to take account of in the matter, and as if there was no real Revelation. We might as well conclude the sun to be only a matter of opinion, because it is sometimes bright, sometimes enveloped in mist, sometimes fiercely hot, sometimes, to man's sensations, imparting no heat at all. Even Revelation, which is sometimes recognised as a force striking a distinct conviction into the human mind, does not break through the laws of spiritual nature, but submits to be modified, and to take us as we are.

Much the same has to be said of the Bible characters. That which was good in them, and which may be called the essence of them, was from the Almighty, inspiring through a medium, and taking account of circumstances. It is thus a very serious matter to ascribe everything we cannot ourselves quite appreciate simply to the spirit of the age, as the result of a spontaneous and still imperfect development.

In all ages, and under all circumstances, the human individual is a very concrete being. Like a tree, he carries the record of storm, rain, and sunshine, good and bad seasons. He has been built up like one of our old churches, in successive styles and ideas. We speak of him as one, and in the next breath we charge him with inconsistency, inconstancy, duplicity,

and everything that implies want of singleness. When we don't like a man we endeavour to find a clue to his character, and therefore to pronounce him bad or inconsistent. Common sense tells us we cannot get at the man himself, or the supposed key to his character; so, as our expression is, we cut him to pieces, and make him, not one, but many. That is what we do with others, and it would be as well if every now and then we performed the operation on ourselves.

There are occasions in which it is necessary to portray character, and this is sometimes done not only with acute discernment but with detail, and at a length which requires a formal summing up. Some historians have been eminently successful, and their success has been by happy antithesis, setting off one quality against another, or an abundance against a deficit. They usually establish that, to be remarkable, or even practical, a man must be, not one, but many. The art does not require much wisdom. Lord Clarendon excelled in it, and was not a very wise man. He had had, however, grand subjects and a stirring period to deal with. A young housekeeper who thinks it necessary to answer every question to the best of her ability, soon finds how many elements go to the formation of character even in the humblest *rôle* of domestic service. She is asked a dozen questions about some poor girl wanting a place, and all proceeding on the supposition that she may have

her various and conflicting qualities. Indeed, she knows that if she simply replied that the girl was well-principled, or meant well, or could generally be relied on, that would be thought as good as no character at all.

The love of variety, of new faces, new scenes, new incidents, and new ideas, is not quite universal, for while it is prominent in civilised peoples and in vigorous races, it is wanting in native tribes, and even in our own agricultural classes. But many a proverb points to its force and significance. The Gospel was a new thing ; it promised new things ; it found the world expecting them, and glad to hear of them. An Englishman cannot live the ordinary life of an Englishman without an increasing love of novelty and of varied life and action. Active and regular as he may be in the discharge of his daily duties, he submits to be for hours the passive recipient of information or amusement. He finds it best for body and soul. But the much needed refreshment is not without its dangers and its trials. Everything that we see, hear, say, or do must react on the constitution of our own natures. In other words, we cannot innocently enjoy or profitably use the variety we crave for without becoming ourselves various, consistently or inconsistently, as may be.

XXIX

RELATIVE EXISTENCE

WE have but to look around us, and then into ourselves, and we must see that we exist manifold, in various and numberless relations, and that every one of us is the living centre of a living world. We exist in ourselves, and perhaps we are wont to consider that our only real existence—the immortal soul, with an assured, happy, but unknown future. Perhaps, too, we may be content to believe, and even wish to believe, that our identity will be reduced to the thinnest and most shadowy form of continuity. Are we not, indeed, distinct from every other person and thing? Do we in any respect cease to be when the relation ceases, either by failure of the object or by some act of our will or change in circumstances?

The actual and the present, however, have some claims to be thought the best guides to our future. Our surroundings are necessary to any practical notion of our identity in this world, and it is not unreasonable to believe them necessary for ever.

Could a man be told in a way he could not doubt that he had no longer any place in this world, and was clean forgotten, quite out of mind, he would feel the greater part of life and of his identity gone. He would, however, have such pleasures of memory and meditation as he might care to indulge in, when it could no longer be for any practical object.

There are incidents, happily not very frequently occurring in the ordinary course of affairs, which illustrate at once identity and the loss of relations. A chivalrous man adopts a cause, gives his whole soul to it, acquires friends in it, is taken into confidences, co-operates in plans, and learns all the freemasonry that is sure to be in any cause. By the death, or the ruin, or the default of the chief, all comes to an end, and is as if it had never been. The partisan is left high and dry, nowhere in fact, and with little inclination to find a new object for his disappointed sympathies. If he is young he can unlearn what he has learnt too hastily. But what remains if he is no longer young?

Take, again, the case of the student who has early, and very wisely, made it his business to form a good library, every volume of which has become part of his history, indeed part of himself. He can put his hand on any book on his shelves, and he knows where to find in it what he wants without waste of precious time. His house and library are burnt to ashes: he has lost his own history, his own little world, half his

life, and most of his future in this world, as far as regards the intellectual enjoyment of it.

If a man were assured that the next minute he would forget everybody he had ever known or come across in this world, he would regard the whole result as a virtual annihilation—unless, indeed, he could persuade himself that it was only a suspension of consciousness. It seems to follow that whatever we know and feel, and have wishes and intentions about, is part of ourselves. Nor is it necessary to consider the case of those who have lost themselves, or, as the phrase is, are beside themselves, having become idiotic or lunatic. These cases are exceptional, and out of the regular order of Providence. We regard such ailments as temporary, that is, terminable either by death or by a return to reason. In a word, we do not reason from the case of the unsound to that of the sound.

We are all of us aware, pleasantly or disagreeably, as the case may be, that others live in us and that we live in them. Nay, we have to feel sometimes that they live in us more than they do in themselves. We can scarcely call the new-born babe conscious, but it absolutely engrosses the spiritual regards of those about it. Later on and for many years the parents are, in general, far more anxious for the child than they are for themselves. The mother is usually supposed to be caring more for her children's education and happy settlement than anything else in this

world. The children, however, have a special capacity for new associations, and they quickly form their own little worlds. Now here is life within life, and life intertwining with hundreds of lives. Such life is the life of the world, the life of history, the life of the novelist, the life of the politician ; that is, the life he has to deal with.

These reflections of ourselves, by no means pale, by no means indistinct, often by no means unsubstantial, are infinitely varied by the peculiarities of the minds receiving and transmitting them. An active politician, for example, or even the leader of a movement, carries a whole world of warfare within him, and cannot help being sufficiently conscious of a like place in the public affection or disaffection. He has no wish to believe this cometary form of existence, this second self, as it were, to be confined to fellow-countrymen or contemporaries. He probably hopes for a position, a presence, a vitality in all places and in all times. The Roman poets expected as much and were not mistaken. A modern philosopher, politician, or theologian, can hardly expect much less.

Now let it be considered that we are actually working in these minds, be they many or few, be they far or near, be they great minds or very humble, and that they are actually working in us. We are reacting on one another. In a sense we are a whole, one indeed. We may be regarded as a whole, or as

parts ; we may be regarded as of one nature, or as many persons. It is conceivable that we might be a corporate whole—the individual persons thus incorporated feeling and acting in perfect unison, and contributing thereby to some general development of the whole. It is also conceivable that there might be so much mutual antagonism as to destroy or threaten, or seriously impair the integrity of the whole. It is still more conceivable, because now actually the case, and our universal and daily experience, that there might be both unison and antagonism, our activities being still affected by all the various motives and passions. That would, indeed, be a fair and sufficient account of the world we live in, if we put out of the question everything that we could not be absolutely sure of.

But the Christian, like the Jew, has to take into account the one Almighty God, Who is the Maker, the Mover, the Inspirer, the Governor of this world. It is in Him, and He is in it—every part of it, every person in it. The whole of this mass of existence, that is, of life, feeling, energy, and free motion, can be doubly regarded—indeed infinitely—but doubly as regards the Almighty and each individual soul. Practically—that is to say, reasoning simply from the lessons of our limited experience—we cannot suppose any one of these lives, though it influence all the other lives in the world ever so much, as far exceeding the average or approaching near to the Divine nature.

In theory we can suppose a man doing without fail, that is by an infallibly right exercise of free-will, that which the Almighty would desire him to do. This may seem too great a concession to the deist, but the truth is the supposition is quite gratuitous, and will not stand any test that can be applied to it.

But, putting that supposition aside, as being without the support of experience, we have minds included in minds, minds influencing and governing minds, more or less dominating over other minds, more or less loved by them or loving them, more or less working upon some great plan and design, all included in the mind of the Almighty, and having towards Him the mixed relations they have with one another. But if we admit Revelation at all, it does not allow us to stop here. Reason itself suggests mediation between this spiritual creation, such as has been described, and its Author. It suggests a work to be done by this creation for the Almighty, through One who Himself leads the way in the performance of that work, and does it so that they who are so disposed share it and share also its future.

XXX

SPIRITUAL EXISTENCE

SPIRITUAL existence, or the nature of spirits, as it would be called in the secondary sense of the word 'nature,' is a matter on which it might be supposed that persons of the least religious feeling would not venture to say much or be very positive about. There have been times, however, when the recoil from certain religious extravagances has led even good people to throw away all reverence and all common sense in the matter. Whatever can be said about it is comprised in the fact that we know, it may be said, next to nothing about it. We do not know how far spirits, or spiritual beings, or they that are no longer in the flesh, but are in the spirit, good spirits or evil spirits, are bound by laws of space and time. We do not know how far they can enter into other spirits, discern spirits, see and hear outward expressions, and perceive inner emotions. We do not know how far they can act for us, help us, intercede for us effectually or at all, or take our part generally in the work of continual mediation now performed by

our Lord 'at the right hand' of the Father. On all these points the theologians who carried the day at the English Reformation took the simply negative, that is, the unbelieving side. They stood chiefly on the ground that we could know nothing about the matter. They succeeded certainly in showing that they had made up their minds to know nothing about it.

All depends on the first start; that is, the basis of our inquiry. If we start from physical law, to physical law we are bound. Yet even physics are suggestive. Light shoots over space very quickly; so does the electric fluid, or whatever it is; and no philosopher thus far has prescribed any limits or laws of time to attraction of gravitation. That a grain of sand should impart and receive instant motion to and from every other particle of matter in the whole universe, while it cannot be asserted, cannot be denied, and seems to pass beyond the range of physics to a higher philosophy.

But, if we admit spirits at all, we must suppose them to be independent of laws of matter. We ascribe to them action upon matter, so far as they may be supposed to communicate with our spirits, whether through the senses or otherwise. But it is not necessary to suppose the mode of communication, for the action of a spirit is that of one spirit upon another. The whole question resolves itself into that of the Divine power and ordinance. The power Christians

cannot doubt ; so the Divine ordinance is the question. Does the Almighty, Himself the Father of spirits, permit and transmit communication between spirit and spirit? Does He ordain, establish, and direct communication between the spirits of the just made perfect and the spirits of the living still bearing the burden of the flesh, with its manifold hindrances? On the one hand, we have an enormous amount of testimony resting on impressions so far open to suspicion, inasmuch as they cannot be proved. Some believe them, some do not. Believers and unbelievers are equally liable to the objection that they believe as they wish to believe, and have nothing but impressions to report to those who are still on the path of free inquiry.

The whole matter is in and of the mind of the Omnipotent, Omnipresent, Omniscient, All Wise, All Good. He knows the hearts of all men, their secret thoughts even, long before ; their wishes, their yearnings, their stretchings of sympathy for the good and true in all places and times. All the redeemed that are, or have been, are pouring their heart-offerings into His bosom, and making Him the great Treasurer of their devotions, their hopes and fears, their pious remembrances and aspirations—indeed, of all their soul's work. In the world of spirits there can be no limits of time or space, for there are no limits to the presence and operation of the Great Spirit in whom and of whom all spirits are.

For aught we know, there may be infinitely various forms and manners of spiritual existence for infinitely various purposes. There are in this world many thousand distinct species and varieties of creatures, each with its own peculiar laws of existence, most of them beyond our power, many of them very far beyond our power. Many of these have means of locomotion, and powers of sight, scent, and even hearing, far exceeding the human. Every year this is repeated by many different species of birds: a migration from their winter to their summer homes and back again, which even if man had wings he would not have wit to perform. If the movements of shoals in the deep sea be less regular, the feat is not less wonderful. A voyager relates his astonishment at steaming, in mid-ocean, through a shoal of medusas so thick as to change the colour of the surface from green to dark blue, the shoal having a motion of its own independent of the current. The form of the creature does not suggest much sentient faculty or instinct, nor has it much power of locomotion. As to its original home, the relater could only guess that it was a particular well-known valley in the deep sea, whence those feeble and senseless creatures emerged to light and life.

The transformations of insect-life would be incredible, indeed never could have occurred as possible, were they not familiar. Were any one told for the first time that there are multitudes of creatures, each first

a very small egg, then a grub growing rapidly to a disproportionate size, then apparently for months with no more life in it than a dry stick or a dead leaf, then breaking out into wings with every variety of pattern and all the colours of the rainbow, he could find it hardly possible to believe so prodigious, indeed so unnecessary a development. The more unaccountable it is upon any physical theory, the more does it suggest a Divine purpose. This can only be the idea of new stages and new powers of human existence, so far beyond our present conception that the Almighty in His wisdom has hidden them from our too greedy gaze. Every year adds to the already long and varied catalogue of natural transformations, in which the same germ of life passes through earth, air, and water, and from one animal to another, with distinct functions and habits in each. In these matters we are still learners, and learning every day. To take another example, the cause and effects of the magnetic forces and currents in the solid globe can scarcely even be guessed. Then how can we pretend to deny that there may be such beings as spirits, or to prescribe their laws of action? We can only conclude it to be as God wills.

But the religious question, it will be said, does not relate to spirits, to 'disembodied spirits,' but to spirits linked with 'spiritual bodies.' It is a reasonable opinion, and a Scriptural doctrine, that after the parting with the present body the soul will be invested

with a spiritual body corresponding in some degree to that which has returned to mother earth, sea and sky. What laws of life and action does the Almighty give to the souls invested with spiritual bodies? Scripture tells us not. But if it gives no positive information as to their occupation and powers, neither does it deny altogether their interest and action in human affairs. All human analogy is much in favour of continuance, even in a changed form; that is, we expect things will be as they have been and are still. The cessation of place, functions, actions, occupations, and all that life seems worth living for, is itself terrible, and only borne cheerfully with the mitigations brought by a Christian faith. We believe that there is not a real and absolute cessation, that our works will follow us, and that we shall still take an interest in them, and, so to speak, follow them up. Such is our hope for ourselves, each Christian for himself and for those with him and about him—for those, too, who are on his side in the great controversy. If such be our own natural and proper wish for ourselves, we can hardly, with reason, wish to believe, or really believe, that the glorious company of the Apostles, the goodly fellowship of the Prophets and the noble army of Martyrs, have nothing to do with us or we with them, in the way of common consciousness and co-operation.

Though the form and mode of spiritual existence may not be a matter for positive treatment, we are not

allowed to leave the question alone. On the one hand, the material philosophers tell us it is all a delusion ; there can be no such thing, there is no evidence and nothing in Nature tending that way. On the other hand, Revelation definitely promises spiritual bodies instead of the poor earthly tabernacles that have returned to dust. The term ' bodies ' suggests laws of life and action, motion and co-operation, bearing some correspondence with those of this present stage of existence. There may be a development far beyond our conception or our own hopes, exceeding even the furthest reach of imagination. Indeed, the very inventive and very audacious faculty of imagination may have been given us for the purpose of picturing the Divine promises before us. As there certainly are no bounds to the creative powers of the Almighty, so are there no limits to the special powers at His disposal.

XXXI

PRE-EXISTENCE

In one matter there is a striking difference between Scripture and theology: that is the question, or questions, of pre-existence. What was there before the Creation? Who was, or who were, before the Creation? What were they? Under what conditions did they exist? Were the conditions of present existence fixed from all eternity? These and the like questions have been discussed as if all depended on them, and as if they were the very points on which the Bible was to enlighten us. Some Churches—after resolutely and steadfastly abjuring everything that is really soul-saving in the Bible, as if it did not in the least concern the elect, already sure of salvation—have devoted themselves to these inquiries. They have fixed their thoughts on the dark regions of the eternal past, as if only too glad to escape the hard and cold restrictions of law and the warm but smothering embrace of the Gospel.

If we are to understand the terms of theology in their literal and mathematical sense, then every

human being existed from all eternity in the Almighty prescience, design, and preparation. Nay, the very life and history of the human being would exist in anticipation, as in memory, and wherever God is—that is, everywhere. But such a speculation can only be touched on for a moment, to warn us against a too perilous handling of the Divine Being and attributes.

On the other hand, when we turn to Scripture, this whole matter of pre-existence is represented by an awful silence, scarcely broken by a few words, whispers rather, of serious significance, but utterly failing to satisfy a speculative curiosity. What we are told is no more, speaking generally, than what we already know, or must suppose by the force of Nature, the light of experience, and the rules of analogy. It is impossible to dispute it, the reasonable soul of man cannot accept the idea of an instantaneous creation of everything out of nothing. Nor is there any such statement in Scripture, the few texts that can be adduced being at variance with more distinct statements, and easily explained. In the opening chapter of the Bible the acts of creation are described as so many steps in progressive existence. The only word used in the Greek version is that used in the New Testament to introduce any fresh incident in our Lord's ministry. It is translated 'was' in Genesis, 'it came to pass' in the Gospels. The human mind revolts from the very conception of an empty infinity, whether of time or of space. It must suppose

space occupied, penetrated, ordered, and governed Nor can it conceive good without also supposing evil ; and of both pre-existent good and evil there are hints in the sacred record. But it would answer no good purpose that we should know more, when there is so much that more concerns us.

Ancient philosophy dealt largely and freely with pre-existence, cycles, eons, changes of forms, and purgatorial conditions of existence. There is no doubt the Pharisees held these views, thinking of the past as they thought of the future ; but our Lord declined to recognise what was a mere philosophy, and did its holders no good.

In spite, however, of the little help to be found from either science or belief, philosophers, theologians, and poets have been emboldened to ask whether we, poor we, did really exist before our births, and, if so, in what order of being. Did we only pass at our births from one life to another, from one form to another—or, say, from one place in the great Court to another ? Certainly there are those who, from the day they had the least power of expression, exhibited a much larger stock of ideas and sentiments than others did, more indeed than their weak physical natures could safely carry and make use of. How, where, and when did they get these risky prepossessions ? There are children that are more men and women at six than others are at sixty. Where did they get that immense start over the common rank ? What are

called social advantages do not always account for it.

As regards intellectual differences, such as different degrees of sensibility, apprehension, taste, genius, and the critical or creative powers, the materialist has a reply. We talk of thin-skinned people, and certainly many more are born pachydermatous, happily for their content. Then, if the photographer can produce a surface which will distinctly record a face brought into proper relation to it for a small fraction of a second, why should not the eye, the most delicate and complicated of all Nature's contrivances, do its work of observation, and record sometimes with such exceptional quickness and vigour as to make a child's impressions and experience equal to a man's? Some may think this a sufficient account of the matter; others will deem it more likely, at least more fit, to be believed that the spirit has formed the matter than that the matter has formed the spirit.

Then there certainly are bad children, bad from the first, and always bad; and there certainly are good children, good from the first, though perhaps not often so perseveringly and consistently good to the end of the chapter. Bad easily goes from bad to worse; good not so easily from good to better.

Take the not uncommon case of two brothers, or two sisters, born, apparently predestined, to a difference of social rank. The two brothers will not be more than a year or two apart, perhaps even twins.

One will be handsome, well-grown, dignified, perhaps also sentimental, poetic, rather dreamy and what people call aerified—not quite of this world, even if not quite for another. The other will be stunted, vulgar, brusque, rough, and comparatively insensible to the ideas and sentiments which possess, perhaps enfeeble, his companion. It is quite possible that the Sancho Panza may in the long run beat the Don Quixote, and prove the better man. But they start with that difference. Where did they get it?

A man's looks are not his fortune—at least, not the whole of it. In his case a bad start does not so much matter. In the case of girls it is a serious affair. A gentleman is invited to a garden-party. After some lively talk with the daughters of the house—pretty, witty, and very sociable—he leaves the central group, and comes on what he supposes to be a maid-servant. 'Would you please tell me where your mistress is, that I may say good-bye to her?' She accepts the position at once, without even a smile, and answers; but she is a daughter, and a very good one in her way. Do we enter the world in character, as well as with parts already assigned? Where had we learnt to assert ourselves or to be shy? In numerous instances, both in sacred and profane history, of two brothers, one is a born hero, the other a born scoffer, generally preserving these characteristics. They may even be combined in one, and thus we come to the remarkable and undoubted pheno-

menon of a double nature, or two natures, maintaining a life-long struggle with one another in one convulsed frame.

Most children of any reflective power are conscious of having prepossessions and preferences that they cannot account for. It is a matter of universal observation, sad as it is, that from the earliest years the child will immediately select the companions, the language, the style, the tone, the opinions on all subjects most to its existing taste, in defiance of warning, advice, and correction. The exceptions to the rule are those who have been matured in some spiritual hothouse to some artificial and external form of goodness, that the first frost will kill and the first hot sun will wither.

So, if we are to go simply by appearances, and not use our reason in the matter, much is fixed for us, if not before we come into the world, yet very soon after, when it becomes difficult to suppose our probation for eternity over and irreparable before we are in our teens, at all events before we are out of them. But really on these matters, for our comfort doubtless, we are told nothing.

The doctrine of transmigration—that is, of the passage of souls from one human tenancy to another, dying in one form and instantly living in another—is not sufficiently warranted, and is far from necessary, yet not wholly gratuitous. It is designed to meet what any one but a theologian, with a heart of stone,

must feel to be a difficulty. The idea of a man born so bad as to remain incurably bad all his life, doing much mischief, and continually becoming worse, is nothing less than shocking. We may, indeed, suppose that he has a chance to better himself, and that any improvement will tell to his account; but still, by the very supposition, he is falling, falling, falling from his very birth, and by the irresistible law of his nature. The moral difficulty of the question is rendered easier by supposing that the man has just come out ill from one term of probation, and is now allowed the opportunity of recovering himself. If he starts in his present stage as he finished in the last, that is his own fault, and he has no one to blame. The real and only proper answer to the difficulty of an apparently predestined and irresistible course of depravity from the cradle to the grave, or some worse destination, is that everything is a difficulty, simple existence the greatest of all difficulties; and we have therefore to be content to leave such questions alone.

But now—such is the method of this volume—from the created to Him who is called Creator, by Whom, or through Whom, or in Whom, all things were created. What are we told of His pre-existence? We are told enough for love and adoration, little for scientific theology, as it is proudly called, and certainly not enough for one man to be much wiser than another upon it, or likely to attain eternal life by the distinctness and certainty of his ideas on the subject. On

the other hand, no reasonable being, unless a caviller, and blasphemer from the cradle, can regard without awe the words : 'The glory which I had with Thee before the world was,' 'In the beginning was the Word,' 'All things were made by Him,' 'All things were created by Him and for Him, and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist,' 'But emptied Himself.' Such expressions surely are to be pondered over in silence, rather than probed, measured, defined, and possibly twisted with the hard weapons of human logic. The truth is, that we cannot comprehend that which is above all creation, or that which, by supposition, was before it. The human mind cannot take in positive creation, except that which now goes on from day to day, and hour to hour, under the divine operations of elemental Nature. But if we cannot enlarge our minds to the great Beginning, still less can we to an eternal negation, or intention of it.

XXXII

PERSON

NO word in our language, or in any other, has undergone so many changes, and in so many directions, as the word 'person.' Long after Biblical times, long after Apostolic times, long after primitive times—nay, when philosophy itself was dead, or in a very deep trance — this word presented itself to the Church under casual circumstances and from some unknown quarter. It was hailed as a friend in need, and, variously manipulated with 'substance,' played a most prominent part in the drama of controversial theology. Reckoning forwards from the Christian era, the word is a novelty. Reckoning backwards from the year A.D. 1891, it is an antiquity, and this is the light in which many good people profess to regard it. We must concede to it a life of some fifteen hundred years, and we must also allow the Church to have been all that time under the Divine protection, and its continual prayers for guidance not wholly disregarded. We must also conclude the word to be significant and instructive. The Church of England

does not, in every case, admit a prescription of near two thousand years to be a sufficient title, but for the present we may admit it is in this instance.

Now, what is a person? A person is a moral agent, possessing free-will, knowing right from wrong —at least knowing that there is a right and that there is a wrong—self-conscious, self-respecting, sympathetic, having due regards, and expecting them in return, and, above all, feeling a certain membership in the universal community of spiritual beings, extending from the Almighty to the new-born child. We use the word in a full sense or limited sense, and even a grudging and disrespectful sense. A very distinguished person we call a 'personage,' as if the lesser word had become threadbare and wanted a new gloss. We apply the word to males and females in the humbler walks and offices of commercial or trading life, but in a way to show that while we are raising them individually we are lowering the whole denomination. We seldom, if ever, call a labouring man, a common soldier, or a common sailor a 'person'—perhaps because we are accustomed to regard them as having little exercise of free-will or any place in social affairs. Of two ladies, equally well born and well educated, and of equally good manners, one will style the other a 'person,' not in regard to herself, but to her position, as having less potentiality, which she confounds with personality. In this sense a dependent is a 'person.'

We do not call animals 'persons,' however handsome, agreeable, clever and amusing—unless, indeed, they show a certain dignified resemblance of humanity; and thus we call a cat, or a dog, or a parrot, 'quite a person.' Many circumstances, many conditions of life, and many characters, make us hesitate for a moment whether to use the word; but the simple fact of our being able to form a moral estimate makes the subject of it a person. Taste and sense revolt against calling the living things in Revelation 'beasts,' though they are not invested with human forms, because they are represented as ever engaged in adoration, of which brutes are incapable.

But here is a fact, a deeply-seated and widely-extended usage, which the Divine Providence has tolerated now for some fifteen hundred years. It is that we apply the same word to the Divine Being that we do to one another, that is, to people in many ranks and conditions. We call our servants, our tradespeople, our dressmakers, our ladies' maids, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and God Almighty 'persons' —some superior, it is true, some humbler, but all alike 'persons.' Admittedly a common idea runs through all the uses of the word, and most certainly that common idea is not that of the histrionic mask which some writers are labouring to force upon us, in utter defiance of history, philology, and common sense. The common idea is that of mutual recognition, reciprocal regard, free converse, and united or

relative action. This understanding of the word 'person' has been much insisted on by theologians, indeed by an English prelate of last century, with a plainness and simplicity that shocked some of his contemporaries. Such is the current use and understanding of the word. Yet if the Almighty and His only Son be comparable to human beings in this respect—indeed, are as men—then it follows that men are in like manner comparable to the Almighty and are as gods. As humanity alone can recognise humanity, so Divinity alone can recognise Divinity, and there must be that which is more than human in man before he can know that which is more than human in God.

But how does this sense of the word 'person,' and the very idea of personality, bear on the supposed absolute Oneness, indeed arithmetical unity, of the Three Persons, alleged to justify Christians in calling the Three Persons one God? Are we really to suppose that, in the revealed communication between the Father and His only Son, it is only one aspect of the Almighty conversing with another aspect of Himself, or as the case of a man deliberating over a question, and taking first one side and then the other? In a word, is the whole Gospel history only a deceptive record of the inner thoughts of the Almighty mind, and was there really no such distinct being as Jesus of Nazareth? or did the distinctness of personality exist only in relation to man, so that man could see,

or think that he could see, two faces, whereas there could be no face-to-face communication within the 'Divine Essence,' and in that element it is all, and only, One? If we are to retain the word and the idea and the doctrine of personality, it will indeed be most strange and inconsistent to strip it of its only possible sense, and conclude it to mean nothing at all.

But there is one use of the word, the most distinctly prominent and the most familiar, from which the attribute of divinity is inseparable in all English regards, indeed in common parlance. The 'parson,' the most universal of English institutions, is the *persona ecclesiæ*, the actual representative of the Church to all members of the Church within certain limits. Be he ever so little of a theologian, he is nevertheless Divine, and reverenced accordingly. By the custom of the country and the force of ancient institutions, he has as much command of the ears and understandings of his congregation as if he thundered from one Mount or preached from another. It is his privilege to deliver both Law and Gospel, even though they both savour much of his own human infirmities. All are persons in that Church or that parish, but he is the 'person,' and he claims a Divine commission, Divine aids, and Divine co-operation. What he says or does, he holds that the Almighty says and does through him—that he is a distinct person, distinct alike from the Almighty and from the poor folk sitting under him.

Even in its ecclesiastical use the word is doubtful, not always acceptable, not even always complimentary. Congregations have wills and voices of their own, and as they are swarming to other hives, and sometimes flitting altogether, there has ensued an evident preference for some title having a more distinctive, more substantial, and more legal significance. The beneficed clergyman is now a 'rector' or a 'vicar,' and even in the gregarious sense, which might be thought redeemed by the sentiment of brotherhood, it is thought hardly respectful to apply the word 'parsons' to a clerical company.

It might seem a fair inference that, if the origin of the word is obscure, its derivation controverted, its introduction into theology very late, its sense either theatrical or legal, its present use depreciatory and even contemptuous, and its application to holy orders exceedingly unpopular with those to whom it is applied, the time has arrived for giving up the use of the word altogether. But it is, as it were, imbedded in modern theology, at least in that of the Western Church, for the supposed Greek equivalent has undergone no like variations of meaning. For the purpose of controversy, which would certainly not be allayed by a surrender of the word, it would be found necessary to find a substitute, and this would be no easy task, if even possible.

Yet it cannot be deemed quite impossible to give up the word altogether, even in controversy, when it

is considered that *persona*, and even the Greek word it was supposed to render best—nay, the numerical conception itself—did not present themselves till long after primitive ideas and primitive feeling had changed, not for the better. Even at the present day the most distinguished divines of the Church of England recognise the piety, and even the theology of eminent Dissenting preachers preferring the primitive to the mediæval doctrine. It is probably one of those cases in which time works the remedy, by the gradual extinction of one practice and the prevalence of another.

The question, then, is whether a term intended for controversy—and, like the word 'party,' just bearable in controversy—is equally suitable for devotion, that is, for addressing the Deity. Did the question rest there it could be easily and straightly answered. It is not a devotional expression. But who can say how much more would be demanded from the Church on the encouragement of this one surrender? A man has to consider well beforehand where he is to stop, and whether either the matter or his own powers and resources will enable him to make the stand that will certainly have to be made somewhere, as they say, between this and the deep sea.

It is, however, sorry comfort to tell people, as doctors sometimes tell the anxious friends of the patient, that the Church of England will outlive this complaint or this disfigurement, as it may be

called. We cannot feel very much interested in an improvement which may possibly arrive a century hence. For ought we know it may come too late to make much difference to anybody. One well-proved, well-attested, and most effectual remedy admits of easy and immediate application. If people would only carry out the intention of the Church of England in accordance with primitive usage, and read portions of Scripture carefully, thoughtfully, and devotionally, every day of the year, they would find theological curiosities occupying a very small, very dim, indeed finally evanescent, place in the mind.

XXXIII

PERSONALITY AND SANCTITY

THROUGHOUT Holy Scripture, in the grandest and oldest traditions of all countries, and in their noblest institutions, human life is a sacred thing, of a Divine origin, and with a Divine destiny. The fall of man from his original state and endowment has shown itself more flagrantly in the disregard of this particular sanctity than in any other violation of law. The Bible itself, being a record of evil as well as of good, often surprises and shocks by incidents seemingly at variance with its high estimate, not only of human life, but of the living principle in its lower forms. All blood, it tells us, is a sacred thing, and must not be degraded into common food. According to an old tradition, it was not to be shed without supplication and intercession, making every act of slaughter a solemn sacrifice. Yet the Mosaic code was very sanguinary, and the promised inheritance was won by a succession of massacres involving the innocent with the guilty, and accordingly visiting on one generation the sins of all before. The political assassin, the tyrannicide, and

the avenger can all quote Scripture in justification of their most violent or most treacherous deeds. Blood never departed from any royal house of Israel or Judah, and all Israel, at the last, well-nigh disappeared in blood, vapour, and smoke, as if good for nothing but to be stamped out and thrown on the dunghill. To this day the strange contrast is maintained, and the life of Israel is at once inextinguishable and always imperilled, glorious and vile, holy to the holy and profane to the profane.

The Levitical law was sparing in material sanctities, that is, in comparison with other religious systems of the period. Whatever was specially sanctified, it was from necessity, or for some urgent reason, or as symbolic of the great central truths, partly revealed, partly hidden in the law. Upon the whole, it must be said that no other religions, no other national institutions, made life, simple life, so safe, so precious, so free, so guarded from deterioration, so pure, so evidently derived from the Almighty and federated with Him, as did the Mosaic code, even in a downward course of change.

The Christian cannot but start from the fundamental truth that life is a sacred thing, a gift, a presence and an image of the Almighty, entitling the possessor to a relative worship and regard. The sense of sacredness must advance from self to family and friends, thence to one common humanity, thence to the Almighty and all living beings. As to the

lower form of life, we need not be cruel or wanton, even if necessity compels the exercise of what we believe to be our right, and use blunts our sense of its inevitably painful character. But when we come to our own species—our own flesh and blood, as it were—the Divine ordinance, agreeing as it certainly does with the divinely-implanted instinct, leads us to recognise a sanctity not to be disregarded except on sufficient grounds.

But while the sanctity and the preciousness of human life and soul directly affect the male, the disregard of it is even more injurious to the female. Wherever and whenever life has become a weed, it leads to the father, the husband, and the son being liable to wholesale destruction, and the mother, the wife, and the daughter reserved for slavery or worse. Wherever the female population, through waste of war or foreign and perilous employment, greatly exceeds the male, it becomes difficult to sustain a high standard of purity. Such was one of the causes of that polygamy which remains the worst scandal of God's own people, and which led finally to the subjugation of all the oriental kingdoms and empires to the Greek dominion. Dark Africa keeps its place and its character by human sacrifices. It ought to be a serious reflection to civilised Europe that its own usages and methods have a decided tendency in the same evil direction. But in any case the female is the chief sufferer, for she lives to know

the consequences. The virtues of the domestic hearth are founded on personal sanctity, the decay of which is the ruin of States, empires, and races. Even the Roman poet, in the luxury and profligacy of an imperial court, retained enough of his rustic simplicity to see in the corruption of home life the source and presage of public disaster.

Of all the things on earth, if indeed it can be properly so described, the human soul is the most sacred, and so high in the order of Nature as not to be wholly included in it. If deity exists, as the ancients believed, in graduation, partition, and continual subordination, then every human being is a deity, and has to be so recognised. There is no lot so secluded, so low, or so monotonous as not to be the appointed sphere of perceptions, aspirations, and estimations that show a high calling and a creative power. The sluggish and servile world of sense runs its daily and yearly course with the regularity, almost the vulgarity, of a machine. But the humblest son or daughter of toil that stands before you, and appears only as one of a crowd, or of a stream of life flowing to and fro at appointed hours, is an abode of the Living God, a temple of sacrifice, an oracular shrine, a hall of audience, a spot of ground on which stands the Captain of the Lord's hosts and pronounces it holy. There stands or moves before you that which can think of a God, even though it fly or defy Him ; that which can recall the past and antici-

pate the future; that which can summon into its presence a vast concourse of persons and things from all countries; that which can frame codes of justice, mercy, and truth, be they ever so narrow or so one-sided. Surely this, if anything, is a sanctity.

In Scripture there is nothing to countenance the opinion of an enormous inequality and impassable gulf between the intellect of the educated and that of the uneducated or illiterate classes. On the contrary, it is always assumed that the poor man is quite as able to understand all that he need know of God and His doings, and all that is necessary to the saving of his soul, as the rich man—indeed, as the learned Scribe or the saintly Pharisee. That the poor man is simpler in his apprehensions, and, not to speak of his want of mental flexibility, does actually revolt from artificial—that is, man-made—notions of the Deity, is so much in his favour.

When the sanctity of the human soul is given up, either in theory or still more destructive practice, what remains for the foundation of those larger sanctities associated with the conception of a Church commanding our spiritual, or of a State commanding our temporal, allegiance? The State can be made magnificent, rich, powerful, well able and willing to vindicate its rights and to reward its loyal sons. It can also be invested with that sanctity which is begotten by an endurance of ages, by a long succession of great sovereigns, and a glorious record of

patriotic achievements. But what can the Church do when man has ceased to recognise in man, whether himself or his brother, the image of God, the 'breath of life,' and the indwelling of the Spirit?

What can be done? The one thing needful we cannot do. We cannot ourselves supply that which God has given, and which we refuse to recognise—a Divine Personality in every soul of man. Some things we can do, and we do them. We invent sanctities, which are sanctities, it cannot be denied, with some foundation in the truth, better than none, but still in place of the better, and too often superseding the better. There are the conventional sanctities of profession, class, time, place, building, vestment, gesture, music, ceremony, and all that can be done by almanack, book, builder, tailor, singing-man, organist, or glass-stainer. The fine arts have ever been obsequious, and they have rendered themselves, in turn, the ready adherents and ministers of every cult that could offer them free range and sufficient guerdon. To the fine arts it matters not whether they glorify the monstrous emblem of bountiful deity that once gathered all Asia to Ephesus, or the severe majesty of a Christian saint, or some hybrid conception of false faith and false mathematics.

That a naturally honest mind can find its way through falsity to truth, and learn inventions first to find them inventions afterwards, is undoubtedly still as true as it always has been. But too frequently is

it found that the most zealous advocates of the artificial sanctities are the strongest opponents and bitterest gainsayers of the natural and divine, the most obstinately insisting on that which is perishable in its use, and the most blindly and madly excluding from all consideration the sanctity of the soul that abideth for ever. Nor is the reason far to seek, and it is one that the young would do well to bear in mind. If people once begin in the early, emotional stage of life to attempt compromises between self-will and submission to a higher law, between the calls of indulgence and of duty, between the easy lapse and the hard strain, between the associations that tend downwards and those that draw upwards, they will inevitably find themselves embracing, closer and closer, till past all recovery, worldly principles and theological impossibilities, no longer conflicting, but working to the same end.

XXXIV

DISTINCTNESS OF PERSONS

THERE is no point on which men are more certain than that they are 'distinct from one another.' A maniac may think himself an emperor, a pope, or a duke, but even he does not add to himself the creation of his fancy; he substitutes it for his true self. It is beyond the reach of common insanity to suppose two persons absolutely one. As all understand it, unity, agreement, concord, and all the words expressing community of feeling and apprehension, imply two distinct persons brought into perfect correspondence and harmony. No one, except in a humorous sense, will speak of two persons as one. The writer once asked a very well-informed and rather liberal Roman Catholic a question about the respective views of Dr. Döllinger and Lord Acton, and the reply was: Döllinger is Acton, and Acton is Döllinger; and it was added that the one was the most accomplished theologian in the world, and the other the most accomplished layman. But of course he did not mean such an absolute resemblance as could not

be distinguished from absolute unity. The Siamese Twins—God made them—were different in appearance, disposition, and manners; far from unity, though never at variance. So it was said, and so it appeared to the writer when he saw them playing a game of chess with a visitor on their first visit to this country. Differences, then, must be from birth, and equally from circumstances; and those differences, once existing, cannot fail to take new and various forms. The moral sentiment has most scope in the case of marriage, and it is quite needless to ask whether there ever ensues a similarity so complete as to suggest the idea of absolute oneness. Possibly one may increase and the other decrease, till outsiders can say which leads and which follows, but there is generally much original difference, ending in satisfactory compromises and a moral unity.

But does any Christian believe himself absolutely one with the Almighty—absolutely one with Jesus Christ—absolutely one with the Holy Spirit? It cannot be said there are no efforts in that direction, no hopes in that quarter, or that the idea is quite foreign to historical theology. Still less can the human mind be thought incapable of the idea, for some such notions do prevail in the East, and have prevailed no one can say how long. The strongest Trinitarian strenuously repudiates the thought of any such meaning being put on Our Lord's words, promising to believers that they shall be one with Him. No—the

Christian feels and must ever feel that he is one person and the Almighty another. While the one person is permitted and enabled to approach the other and communicate with Him, still there is an absolute distinctness of personality. How, then, does it stand with regard to Him Whom we know to be man and believe to be God, at once of us and infinitely above us? How is He with regard to Him whom we regard and worship as the one God Almighty, the Father of us all?

When it is said that there is no such thing as absolute oneness between several persons, and therefore nothing to lead up to such a dogma in regard to the Deity, the usual reply is that this is a question not of experience, not of human reason, but of faith, which is privileged to believe without either intelligence, or proof, or probability, or apparent possibility. But faith itself requires some slight inceptive indication of that which it believes, otherwise that which it believes cannot be said to exist at all in the mind of the supposed believer. That which is believed must have its notional representative in the mind of the believer, otherwise the dogma becomes idle words. In absolute oneness distinct personality must disappear, to human apprehension at least. Theology cannot quite dispense with the concurrent aid of human apprehension. If our apprehension be ever so dull and feeble, still it must count for something in this matter.

An increasing majority of Englishmen, including most of those who think well over a doctrine before they accept it, cannot be brought to say that the Son is absolutely one with the Father. They are told that they say as much when they address our Lord Jesus Christ, and worship Him, for by so doing they admit Him not to be bound by laws of space and time, and to have an unlimited power to comply with their requests. If they reply that prayer never has been held to imply the absolute divinity of the person addressed, it having been customary in all ages to address prayers to departed saints, and, in earlier days, to a lower order of divinities, they are further answered on that point: 'Oh, then, you would make Our Lord a departed saint, or a divinity of the second or third order!' The proper answer to such objections is that we cannot possibly define the relation of the Father and the Son otherwise than by the words and acts of the Son, and so long as we confine ourselves to the obvious significance of those words and acts, we need not add to them any doctrine of our own.

Then, what can we possibly know, or say, about our own condition, our own form, our own locality, our own circumstances, when the soul is released from the body and wings its flight, as we hope, nearer the Almighty? We certainly hope to be in the presence of God, and with God, and even to see God as He is and remain with Him for ever. In this conception we discard all thought of locality, of physical bonds, of fixed

relations to fixed circumstances. Yet we certainly do generally expect our personal identity to be still distinct from the Deity. We start with the idea of perfect distinctness, which it is impossible to discard. No notion is so natural, obstinate, and inveterate; we retain it to the very end, at least in this part of the world. It may be questioned whether any Christian, however resolved to be an Athanasian or nothing, or however resolved to be more Athanasian than Athanasius himself, can ever so exclude the notion of absolute distinctness as to arrive at the notion of absolute oneness between any two persons in this matter.

XXXV

PERSONALITY AS AGAINST FORMALITY

ALL moral and all religious ideas, if they are seriously entertained and carried out into practice, will express themselves in modes, phrases, formalities, and style. These are inevitable and helpful, for a man does that more easily and promptly which he does after a habit and a fashion. On this account religious peculiarities are wisely tolerated in any community that recognises the claims of conscience, and it always devolves on those who are offended to show a better way. Yet this, which is an inevitable development, may be carried too far, and to ill consequences, for a man may soon identify his own particular forms with the essence of religion, and conclude that he is the only truly religious man in his neighbourhood, in his country, or in the world. He may conclude that it is his right and even duty to insult, to injure, to rob, and even slay those who are not religious after his own manner and way. He may even think himself a martyr if the intended victims have turned the tables upon him, and done

to him what he had done to them, and intended further to do.

The Pharisees are the great example of this cardinal error. They had developed the Law, which contained the elements of liberty, into a ceremonial rule and social system, like one of the numerous castes dividing our fellow-subjects in India. They had made the Law the religion of the bettermost, leaving out the 'accursed' people. At a time when the simple faith of the Jews was penetrating the philosophy and the poetry of the outer world, and even finding a place in its authentic history, they compassed sea and land to make—one proselyte.

It may be thought a bold statement, but it cannot be denied, that while formality was the very essence of Pharisaism, it was totally absent from the teaching and preaching of Christ, and if present, present under sufferance and protest, in the life and teachings of the Apostles. One of the most noticeable features of the Gospel narrative is the number and variety of persons to whom severally our Lord gave one look, one word, one act, and then dismissed them to return to their friends and avocations, and carry out the one lesson He had given each one of them.

This entirely accords with the character of Our Lord as Son of Man, in sympathetic communion with every child of Adam, and it accords not less with his character as Son of God, showing that a single word from Him would work its own way, and

accomplish all that it had to do. It accords with the fact of a world to be converted to one personal faith, though now, and so far as we see to all time, divided into a countless variety of races, languages, and conditions.

But this very formality, thus missing, so to speak, from the great Beginning of the Christian Church, has been the pretence, the stumbling-block, and the condemnation of all the attempts to repeat the Divine call on new lines, promising a quicker, wider and completer effect. The early Christian sects ever tended to formality—the formalism of speculative faith, the formalism of hermitical or conventual life, the formalism inseparable from grand edifices and numerous church-supported establishments. Mahomet did but substitute one formal religion for another. The great revivalists of the Western Church in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were formalists, and whatever may be said of their occasion and their provocation, their merits and their successes, they certainly paid the usual cost of their formalism in both political and speculative error. There is nothing in the Gospel to justify the reorganisation of society on the principle of pious and idle mendicancy, to reduce the industrious to slavery and the political powers to subjection, and thus to put at the top of all things the hypocritical, dirty, and eventually immoral and insolent beggar.

But herein may be seen the truth, the vitality,

and the continual presence of the eternal Son. He ever reasserts Himself. The systems carefully framed to perpetuate for all ages the dominion and the opinions of some one man, advancing from a just quarrel to an unjust arrogation, decay, rot, and fall to pieces under the slow operation of time or the quick execution of some avenging hand. But the Heaven-sent Truth rises again, and will rise, even though we have to say that in the Divine work, as in all human works, there is still imperfection, and that not yet is the end.

XXXVI

PERSONALITY OF JESUS CHRIST

SINCE the Sun of Righteousness rose with healing in His wings, and dispelled the lesser lights and illusive mists of ancient error, the great questions that have most occupied the religious and thoughtful world have been: Who and What is Christ? These we may venture to regard as two distinct questions. The first of them—Who is Christ?—is that which has most divided Christian philosophers, theologians, Churches, and historians. It comprises such inquiries as: How much is He of God, and how much of man? What was the amount of His consciousness? How far had He emptied Himself of His original deity? Whence dated His Sonship, His inspiration, His exaltation, His pantocracy, and His glory? Most young men, vainly endeavouring to penetrate through the darkness of the Infinite, are wisely recommended a more practical turn, in the pulpit at least. The second question—What is Christ?—inclines rather to that personal demonstration of Him which comes within the intelligence and the feeling of

ordinary Christians. It comprises the contemplation of His character or His characteristics; the manner of man He was; His peculiarities, and in what respects He differed from ordinary leaders, teachers, and men to be loved, admired, and compared with one another.

Under the first of these two heads—that is, for example, in any inquiry into the eternity of Christ, or His place in the so-called Trinity—no preacher or writer will dwell on the sweetness and the tenderness of Christ, His universal sympathy, His fondness for children, His gentleness to women, and such-like features of His conduct and conversation. In truth, the man is apt to disappear altogether in questions which go back to a supposed eternity without man, and forwards to an eternity in which man will no more be the man that he now is. Under the latter of these questions the tendency is to dwell so exclusively on the quite unique and surpassingly beautiful presentation of the man Christ as given in the Gospels, as interpreted in the Epistles, and as illustrated in the lives of myriads of true believers, as to leave His Divine nature an obtrusive difficulty, an indistinct notion, and an ever-unsettled question.

Now here are two distinct, indeed different, notions of Christ. In one He is God, or chiefly Divine; in the other He is man, or chiefly human. In one He is incomprehensible, except so far as we know what we mean when we use that word; in the other He is comprehensible, indeed to a large portion of

the human race better apprehended, better understood, and more loved than any other human being that their eye has never rested on, and whom therefore they have to take on the report of others.

Though it is written that Christ is the express character of God and the image of His person, which seems to forbid any comparison between the character of the Father and the character of the Son, we cannot but take into account that St. Peter, St. James, and St. John, the most constant, most inseparable, and most loving of our Lord's companions, describe His character, His bearing, and His very manner, as they would the striking and noteworthy features of a much-loved friend. As a matter of fact, such an estimate of our Lord is widely and implicitly held by all Christians who may be called devout, rather than orthodox or theological.

But how stands it in this country on this matter? Undoubtedly the Christ preached in the pulpits of the Church of England, on the one hand, and the Christ preached in the great majority of the pulpits not of that Church on the other, are very different persons.

He must indeed be a bold man who sits down to analyse and portray the character of Almighty God. He will have to put the whole story of human affairs and the universe itself into a crucible, and sit by patiently watching for the result. Nevertheless, there are certain universal ideas of the Divine nature inferred from the course of Nature, as from the con-

stitution of man and from the providential order as far as man can discern it, and it is sufficient to say that what men think, believe, feel, and say of God Almighty is generally as a darker background setting forth the bright, tender, and beautiful character of the Son.

If, then, we are to accept as testimony of some weight and significance the current impressions and really deep persuasions of, say, half the Christians of this country, there is a distinct personal difference between the two characters, and the Father and the Son cannot be considered as absolutely one. But is not this what we are to expect, and what is indeed the very truth? The one is Father; the other is Son. Be father and son ever so agreed, ever so much one in spirit, still, while they are together in conference and co-operation, as the Heavenly Father and Heavenly Son must ever be, they must be distinct presentations, and to all human apprehension absolutely distinct persons.

It is a matter to call for the gravest inquiry and the sternest challenge that the Christians of this country should be about evenly divided on such a point as the character and person of Him in whom both sides profess to believe, and by whom both sides hope to be saved. Though both sides may be in error, both cannot be in the right. Which side, the established or the unestablished, holds the truth once delivered to the saints, and testified to by centuries

of martyrs and confessors? Which may claim most confidently and most justly the early creeds and the four great Councils? If the question turn on this one point alone, then indeed is the position of the Church of England most perilous. We have only to suppose the exclusively Anglican dogma—viz. that of the Catechism and the Litany—compared honestly and impartially with the teaching and the testimony of the early Fathers. Were that now done by an authority commanding the respect of the British people, and the Church of England were so infatuated as not to accept the appeal, it would have to surrender its pulpits and a good deal more to the Dissenters, and defend its Catechism as best it could in Bethels, Sions, and Ebenezers.

XXXVII

THE LAMB THAT WAS SLAIN

A DISMAL note, like the last groan of an expiring world, is heard now and then: 'Nobody believes in the Atonement.' At the centres of thought, at the seats of learning, at any place where half a dozen good talkers can meet and outface the Almighty, the question is now finally settled. The Atonement, it is ruled, is a heathen and Jewish superstition, a pretty fancy as long as it could be as much as half-believed, a pretence for subduing the human intellect, and for levying contributions. There can be no such thing, it is said. It is out of all reason that the death—not a real death, indeed, and by no means a voluntary or complete self-sacrifice—should have an eternal efficacy in the salvation of many millions living, dead, and to come. The people who talk in this way tell us they do not want an Atonement. They think it the weakest point of the whole Christian scheme, and go so far as to add that it impairs much that might otherwise be worth preserving. But in fact they go on to throw away every other

part of the Christian revelation, and thereby testify to the cardinal character of this particular doctrine.

Ideas of atonement, of expiation, of vicarious suffering and work, and of self-sacrifice, run through the constitution of man and of society, and may be said to darken not only history but all human affairs. All have to work for others and suffer for others. On all sides are heard the cries of indignation from those who suffer from no fault of their own, and who find themselves severely punished for the crimes of people they never saw, people they never heard of, and over whom they could themselves have no possible control. The better men are, the more philanthropic or patriotic, the more tender-hearted, the more indignant, justly indignant, at wrong and outrage, the more will they have to suffer for their zeal. No office in Church or in State, from the highest to the lowest, can be faithfully discharged without entailing pains and costs much exceeding the nominal honour and emolument. Wherever you see a good and true servant of the Church or the State, there you see a victim or a martyr.

It is true that there are men who can so manage their affairs, and even the affairs of the Church or of the State, that they seem to do the required work successfully and pleasantly, and who therefore could not be referred to as instances of vicarious suffering. They may, too, be just the men who would think nothing of the theory, calling it a theory and nothing

more. They may also be the very men who would even deride the idea of the great Atonement. We have to speak charitably of those whom we regard as the sufferers of a great loss, maimed, morally and intellectually, from their very birth. Indeed it cannot be disputed that the great, the divine, and the ennobling principles of action that raise man above the brutish level, run in strains, as it were, and are found here, missing there. There are patriots, and there are those who do not believe in patriotism. There are saints, and there are those who scoff at sanctity. But if a sublime quality is present here and wanting there, and if a grand idea is accepted here and rejected there, then are we surely at liberty to make the presence the rule and the absence the exception, as there certainly will be those who make the absence the rule and the presence the exception.

Ancient philosophy, in its continual and universal battle with superstition, discountenanced the idea of atonement. If it made terms with the supposed deities, that was rather a compromise with opinion. It might be a weakness in the gods that required the gratification, but it was more likely a weakness in the people. But the general tone of these philosophers was more significant than their formal teaching. It was a sublime indifference to the caprices of fortune, the frowns of power, the fluctuation of popular opinion, and to that insensate tyranny, that brute violence, that childish wanton-

ness, which they supposed to be in the very nature of things, and which they accepted at the hand of the Eternal Destinies, or perhaps modified at the altar of Fortune. The philosophers themselves, like their Christian successors, were generally conscious of making but a poor fight against the material forces of the world. They were often helpless, deserted, and beaten in the battle of life. They were victims on they knew not what altar. So they came to the conclusion that human nature was either specially bad, or that it came under the same laws of action as the brute. In effect, they inferred man to be a very vicious and stupid animal, and as for the gods, if gods there were, they could be no better than either man or brute.

These conclusions testified to two facts—first, the universal wish to do good and to gratify just expectations at some proportionate cost and also proportionate reward, at least on the rule of share and share alike; secondly, that the noblest and purest wishes that can and do move the human soul to extraordinary exertions and sacrifices do not find their full and sufficient scope with men, taken, as they are, on the petty scale of human affairs. In other words, the experience and the calculation of ancient philosophy came to the conclusion that that which was best in human nature and in human affairs had not a fair scope, a proper work, and a just recognition in this world.

How fares it, then, in these days with the doctrine of the Atonement, the most prominent idea in Pagan antiquity, in the Bible, and, it must be added, in the Roman Catholic Church? That it has always and everywhere had to be vindicated from abuse, and still has, testifies to the universality of the notion and the practice. The worst accusation brought against it is that it is founded in Nature, and that they who most rely on it are those who have to act on religious feelings without the power or opportunity of reasoning upon them.

It is an admitted fact that the Atonement is more preached in the 'Chapel' than in the 'Church' in this country. It is frequently charged on Dissenters that they put forward this doctrine too promptly, too frequently, and too unreservedly. It is alleged that they teach it at once to 'babes and sucklings,' who cannot understand it, and are likely to make an ill use of it. Dissenters are charged generally with giving the priority to the passive element in Christian doctrine, and teaching an indolent reliance on the work of salvation done once for all. They are told they give an undue and dangerous prominence to the fact —the admitted fact—that Christ, by his death, has bought us, and redeemed us from the consequences of sin. Nay, more, it has been repeatedly observed that on this point Dissenters go along with Rome, which insists more on the cross than on the divine character, the divine life, and the divine teaching.

The Dissenting minister generally finds no difficulty in preaching the Atonement, for he preaches Christ, the only Son of God, offering Himself to His Father for the sins of the world. The Church of England man does find great difficulties, for, however he may himself understand the matter, or think to understand it, as soon as he tries to unfold his meaning to his poor rural flock he finds himself caught in the trap, for it is no better than a trap, of the Anglican dogma. He has been preaching, perhaps teaching, in the school, perhaps preparing candidates for confirmation, and trying to force into them that the Father, the Son, and the Spirit are one God, whom we are bound to worship accordingly as One God. The only possible way in which he can reconcile the doctrine of the Atonement with this more fundamental hypothesis, as he deems it, is to say with the Fathers of the Western revival, St. Bernard and St. Anselm, and with a whole catena of Anglican theologians down to our own time, that God Himself came down from heaven, became man, suffered, died, was buried, and rose again to avert His own wrath, pay the debt due to Himself, and be Himself the expiation for our sins. The clergyman will say this, and perhaps the people will understand him sufficiently to ask, 'What becomes of Jesus of Nazareth in this doctrine?'

XXXVIII

IMPOSSIBILITY OF A PERFECT HUMAN TEACHER

WHAT finds favour with many minds, though more or less avowed, is the supposition of a character invested with miraculous properties and powers, assisted by miraculous warnings and privileges, and supplemented by miraculous circumstances. In a former chapter (XI.) was supposed the expedient—if a Divine operation can be so described—of a perfectly good man, who should draw to himself the whole world by the simple force of goodness and truth, and it was pointed out, among other objections, that such a being would have to be assisted by miracles, or the Divine intervention, at every stage of his work. The present supposition accepts that necessity. It supposes the man, his work, his words, his methods, and his necessary assistance by immediate followers and circumstances to be entirely miraculous, but that, after all, the principal figure in this exhibition is to be simply a good man, and to remain simply a good man, doing his duty, and pro-

mulgating an unquestionably high system of morality and religion.

The Old Testament and the traditions of Pagan antiquity carry us some way in this direction, but the instant we try to put the supposition into intelligible and probable shape, and to make it clear to ourselves what we mean, we encounter insuperable difficulties. Letting alone the enormous and chaotic mass of ancient myth, the history of the Church itself warns us of the dangers of a simply miraculous foundation of faith and guide of works. Where are the miracles to end? In what stage of transmission, in what age, in what generation, at what conjunction of circumstances, at what step of the necessary sequence is the Almighty supposed to hold His hand, and allow the order of events to revert to the non-miraculous? When shall we say that the speaker has been heaven-directed, and the hearer a man—simply a man, with his ordinary senses and natural understanding? The process lies before our eyes: the confessed deity at one end, not to be recognised by any token at the other. Where has the current of divinity been arrested, or diverted, or diffused?

The secondary miracles necessary to secure the full appreciation of the primary miracles of a perfectly good man would have to be on the secondary stage of procedure, and in the secondary rank of agents—that is, in the persons of the recipients them-

selves. For every act and word of the supposed miraculous goodness, it would be necessary to reverse habit, to change the customary laws of moral vision, to make evil good and good evil, to interrupt identity, and in effect to substitute on each occasion one individual for another. The best men have done and said things which have not been appreciated, and never will be. Fairness, indeed, and common sense may suggest that they alone know the whole case, involving the particular points upon which the question turns. They alone may know that a certain person was a traitor in the camp, that a certain profession was insincere, or a certain promise unreliable. They alone saw the rock ahead, and the only course possible. They alone could distinguish between the doves and the crows. They were the sole depositories of truths that could neither be disregarded nor fully divulged. All this has to be borne in the ordinary course of human affairs. But on the particular supposition left us there is to be no such difficulty. The world, such as it is, is to be converted by a manifestation of perfect goodness, which the world, as it is, would certainly not be able to appreciate.

But goodness itself is not a universal recommendation, even when it is recognised, which is not always the case. Low-minded men hate goodness. They have hated it from the cradle. Indeed, as has been observed above, it is generally unpopular, suspected, and shunned. There are philosophers who deny its

existence. Theologians warn us that it is a special gift of God, bestowed in measure and in kind, suited to various characters, conditions, and circumstances, but not a communication of the Divine essence. We cannot say that God is good otherwise than in the sense that He is that He is. But if any one will cast a glance at what are called national characteristics far or near, and the universal custom of calling evil good and good evil when it suits convenience or taste, he cannot but conclude it impossible to build a scheme for the moral regeneration of the human race on the manifestation of a perfect goodness when the people's notions of goodness are so various and contradictory. Nations, churches, and schools of thought have always had their respective heroes or saints, whom, in a measure, they worship; but the judgment of the human race collectively would be against every one of them.

Whoever it be that is sent into this world to regenerate it, must come in some form and condition and circumstance. It must be either a second David or a greater Solomon, or a prophet such as Elijah or Malachi making occasional appearances, or such a one as Moses or Joshua, or possibly one fitter to dispute the government of the world with an Augustus or a Tiberius. Anyhow, he must take his place in the ranks of our common humanity. All the above personages had circumscribed reigns, limited functions, shortcomings, and failures. Whoever can suppose

that the like, on even a grander scale, might be sufficient for the proposed work, will have to consider how far he is encouraged by all we read of the above examples. He will also have to consider whether the Founder of the Church be such as any one of them.

These are rather points for independent inquiry than links in a methodical argument. Every step a man may take in an estimate and computation of the plain necessities involved in a spiritual transformation of the world from heathenism to Christianity, will bring out more the immensity of the task, so much indeed that the calculation can never come to an end. So long as the scale is human, the requirements will be found to grow and multiply. Nothing of earth that we can imagine will be enough. We shall find ourselves, as it were, embarked on an expedition in which it will not be sufficient to maintain our strength and equipment at the first proportions. The further we advance the stronger must we be, and still find ourselves, if earth is to be our only platform, as far from the desired object as ever.

The further we advance, too, the more shall we feel that this is not a matter in which we can pretend to dictate to the Almighty the way in which the work shall be done, the manner of man to do it, or the mode of operation. We certainly have no right to except to a deliverance that it is not what we should have expected or quite desired. This would

be flying in the face of all experience, which teaches nothing so much as that the Almighty, whether in small matters or in great, will always have His own way, and that His ways are not as our ways.

We have not far to go for an example. Let it be our own dear country. It has always been noted for its insularity, for its love of self-government, and for its belief that in all the world there was nothing so good as England. From the days of the Druids it has always looked to the right theology, the right philosophy, the right education, the right culture, style and fashion, as the proper correction of its social ills. To that belief we owe our grand institutions and noble foundations. But if we look to our history we find that the actual growth from the acorn to the oak has been by unexpected means. It has been done by Romans, by Saxons, by Danes, by Normans, by successive troops of Continental adventurers; by new dynasties from France, from Wales, from Scotland, and from Germany; by a Reformation, by a Civil War, by a Commonwealth, by a Restoration and a Revolution, all leaving in us the conviction that God has done the work.

XXXIX

DIFFERENT IMPRESSIONS OF CHARACTER

We know that two persons before us are not one and the same. They may be closely united by bonds of affection, by relationship, by marriage, by employment, by interests, or by all together, and yet we cannot ever regard them as one. There are certain evident differences between them, amounting to what we should call an assignable difference of character. They may or may not do exactly the same things, or say exactly the same words, on any particular occasion. Most probably they will not, and generally there will be a difference indicating a difference of character. One will accede to a request as if by rule, or as a matter of course, or with a stipulation; the other will do it more tenderly, more impressively, and unreservedly. The one will take the opportunity to remark on what you are about; the other, to relieve you of a misgiving and to reassure you. The one will consent ungraciously, the other refuse sweetly. Some difference there will be, however superficial and immaterial. We are seldom surprised. It is what

we had expected, or now feel we ought to have expected. Indeed, we seem to know, or at least to have the means of knowing, what people will do under certain circumstances. When we find ourselves mistaken, we conclude it to be our own fault

So here we find ourselves under certain impressions as to people – impressions that had formed themselves in our minds before we were conscious of it, and while we thought we were quite free to form what impressions we pleased, or, more probably, had no thought of forming impressions at all. Unless there be special reasons or some very strong prejudice, we generally wish to be spared the trouble of receiving distinct impressions. These impressions, if we do acquire them, become strong enough to influence our conduct. Such is the foundation of our estimates as to personal character, commonly formed long before it has ever occurred to us to apply reason to the matter. A word, a look, a feature, a curl of the lip, a blankness, will produce a lifelong impression. The impression, it is true, depends as much on ourselves as on the other; and in this way one person on the same occasion may produce a variety of impressions. Indeed, any two spectators or listeners may be expected to give two different accounts of the person they have seen or heard for a single minute once in their lives. Thus any number of persons will have their respectively different impressions and personal estimates of one and the same person.

Nevertheless, no amount of difference in the estimate of one and the same person can destroy the value of these estimates as to distinctness of personality. If there be two distinct persons, even with much that is common, they will, on the whole, be differently estimated, and the comparison of any number of estimates will never lead to the conclusion that they are one and the same. Should there happen to be any doubt on the matter, or should there be some actual confusion of record or authority as to the respective identities, it will be sufficient to consult the impressions generally made. A very little examination and comparison of these impressions will be found sufficient to prove the identity of each of the persons in question, and to distinguish them from any others with whom they might have been confounded.

Of course this does not apply to mythology, or legend, or unwritten tradition, in all of which it has frequently happened that one person has by the laws of moral refraction and reflection become many, often differing much one from the other—each, indeed, a new creation of the poetic faculty.

Surely in this matter one may safely appeal to the impressions of all Christian people on the personality, that is, the character of the Almighty and that of Jesus Christ. Surely all regard them differently. Both learned and unlearned, wise and simple, have, and cannot help having, different conceptions of the Father and of the Son. Milton has been summarily

in the matter of their relation Yes but the character & essence is One & the Same — "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father"

set down as an Arian mainly because he makes the Son plead with the Father in the cause of mercy against the claims of justice; but that only represents the popular, that is, the universal impression. Nor is it simply a theory, for it is founded on a hundred passages in the life and ministry of our Lord, and as many texts of the plainest significance and capable of no other meaning. If we read the Gospels, and give our hearts to each verse but for an instant, which is all the ordinary pace of reading allows, we can come to no other conclusion than that Jesus of Nazareth, thus interceding with His Father, and praying to Him, and submitting to Him, is indeed another person, and not to be regarded as one with the Father, except as to His perfect unity of affection, will, act, and design.

But does not He whom we, in common with the Hebrew and the Greek, recognise as the one God Almighty, present Himself in an infinite variety of moods, insomuch that we might say He is many in one? Heaven frowns and smiles; darkness covers one land, a flood of light is poured upon another; one whole life is a continued sinking into deeper and deeper misery, another from first to last is one of increasing joy; a generation of national shame and despair is succeeded by one of glory. It sometimes happens that one man has all these experiences, and sees the Almighty in all His moods. If he does, he nevertheless cannot but believe that God is One.

The whole matter, from first to last, in all its bearings, must be regarded as a Divine operation. There is absolute unity, none can doubt. It is the Almighty Father who would save us and bring us to our true home. Whatever differences of impression there be as to Him and His Son, it is the Father who is the author of our salvation through His Son. He who maketh one man differ from another, so that no two are absolutely alike, and who makes in all relation a difference, has also made the Son discernible from the Father. The angelic manifestations were not so discernible; indeed, they were neutral. So we may justly ask, Have we been deceived in this matter? Have the simpler members of the Church, the lambs of the flock, been led to believe that God was one and Jesus Christ another, when they were, after all, but One? Where lies the appeal? To the Bible? That has long since settled the question, in this country at least. To the Fathers? Alas for the poor suitors driven to that court!

XL

CONDESCENSION NECESSARY TO THE WORK OF SALVATION

ALL designs to prepare men for a Divine intervention must begin with a double condescension, that is, a descent to the level of those who are to be made better than they are now, and a submission on their part to the inseparable conditions. It is a universal rule of life. There is no natural, or social, or political, or commercial relation or transaction that does not involve, on both sides, respective submission to the necessities of the case. To take a single instance: the teacher must submit to teach and the pupil to be taught The former must adapt his teaching to the intelligence, the existing ideas, and the pace of his pupils, and the pupils must submit to be taught instead of following their own vagrant fancies, or what they may please to think their own better lines of thought. If condescension is to be measured by the sacrifices willingly incurred, then the condescension of the parent, of the instructor, of the ruler, of the employer, is vastly greater than that required

from the child, the subject, the scholar, and the servant, and not less necessary.

In all these cases it is the superior that has to lead the way and set the example. He stands first in the order of time, of rank, of power, of intelligence, and in regard to the particular relation or design. If there ensue a failure, he is held the most responsible. As he is entitled to the larger share of the gains, so also he is of the losses. In the course of history he is the only one who is remembered, and history records his virtues and his successes, or his errors, his crimes, and his disasters. The latter may be generally summed up in a want of proper relations with his subordinates, adherents, servants, and followers.

Providence does not leave the ordinary sustentation and progressive improvement of society to the simple instinct of benevolence. Work has to be paid for, and, as a rule, is not done well if it be not paid for. People enter into their various offices for their own interest or pleasure, and shortly find that they have no honest choice but to do their bounden duties, which, however, they may discharge well or ill. On the other hand, none can rise, or even hold their present position, without conferring benefits, real or presumed, on the whole society. The immediate impulse is a more or less respectable selfishness. The individual has wants and aspirations, and sees that others have also. So he will rise and raise, and thus

contribute to the aggregate movement, just as a thousand men used to draw a rock across a country, or make it the pinnacle of a temple. In the humbler walks of life these lessons are sternly and deeply incised on the daily and nightly experience of every man and woman. It is all continual work, in the dullest, the most laborious, the most painful, and often the most revolting forms—forms that can only be redeemed by the thought that God has ordained them, and that He is present in them.

But when we come to those who may be called free agents and capable of a perfectly spontaneous ambition, they have foreshadowed and foreschemed their own elevation, and it is accomplished by putting some force upon circumstances, or by some evolutionary process, or by the exercise of stronger energy and will, or by some lucky hit, or through some happy turn of fortune. The change is not to be in themselves — that is, in the spiritual part of their nature—for with themselves they are satisfied, and they are tenacious of their identity. They recoil from any actual change of nature. What if the change proposed to them should render them incapable of enjoying that which they desire? They wish for more of what they have, and better than what they have, as gold is better than silver, a palace than a hovel, or as an empire is better than a cabbage-garden, and to be a bird is better than to be a reptile.

The wish to rise ever suggests the ways and

means—knowledge, eloquence, and skill; it also fashions the occasion and the agents. Who is to lift us out of this slough? Who is to save us from this bondage? Who is to extricate us from these countless embarrassments? Soldiers, statesmen, princes, philosophers, men of action and men of the tongue, all count among possible deliverers. Even pious Jews were much perplexed by certain prophecies in which they discerned the voice of God, but which did not quite agree with the popular and natural idea of a triumphant Saviour and King. Whatever else He might be, He must conquer and win the day. Vengeance must be speedy. Salvation must not linger. If even the wise and good were not fully prepared for the Christ that came, how much less the commoner sort.

It is the same to-day, when the Church has in a manner to repeat the Divine work of preparation, and to encounter the same old obstacles. The world will dictate to the Almighty how He shall save the world, and by what tokens the world is to recognise Him. This is distinctly not the case in the common course of human affairs. The world is full of surprises, the event being frequently not only quite unexpected, but directly contrary to expectation. The inevitable result of presumptuous anticipation, whether in common life or in any higher matter, is to lay down lines of thought far more likely to lead away from the truth than to it, and far more likely to pro-

duce dissatisfaction with the event when it comes than cheerful recognition.

By any test which God's Word and true philosophy can apply there was no unfitness in the 'form of a servant,' a humble employment, and a lowly companionship, for the Saviour of God's people, and consequently of the world. But Jew and Gentile had formed their own notions on this point, and would not be disabused of them. So it is to this day. In certain quarters it is indeed simply incredible—impossible, indeed—that a working-man could entirely change the destiny of the human race now and for ever. Theologians and philosophers alike reject the man. There is nothing like this, they say, in all our experience ; nothing like it in all history. It is contrary to all known rules of action, causation, probability, and propriety. It is an extravagant conception ; it is below the dignity of the Supreme Being. Believe this, and you may believe anything ; nay, they who do believe this have been only consistent in adding an immense quantity of fabulous legends which are simply the repetition and echoes of the original imposture. This they say in spite of the truth, which neither the theologian can dispute nor the philosopher disprove, that the Almighty is in the veins, the heart, the head, the fingers, and the tip of the tongue of every village carpenter, as well as in the conqueror, the sage, the high priest, and the anointed king.

Then for the Greek idea of Him that was to be.

Should the Almighty send a great moral philosopher? Should it be one who could place the duties on a firm basis, and indicate the springs of the virtuous affections; who could reconcile the many rival claims to love and obedience, and distinguish the true from the false, the genuine from its imitations? Should He be one who could put together all the scattered parts constituting the right body politic and the really good man; who could harmonise reason and instinct, and convert the passions into virtues; who could tell us and show us how to be at once great and good, generous and just, true to self, to friends, to nations and mankind?

That there may yet be such a teacher, and that he may have a great and real success, is barely conceivable, but he has not yet appeared. It is a melancholy fact that the moral philosopher hitherto has been the greatest of failures. In almost every other work or profession you may be a great success and a great ideal. As a statesman you may secure peace, bring nations to a common mart, and set flowing the genial currents of one common humanity. As a soldier you may extend the reign of order, and check the inroads of barbarism or ambition. As a physician you may lengthen life, purify the air we breathe and the blood that flows in our veins. As poet or novelist you may be sure of grateful readers from world's end to world's end, and to all time. As an artist you may implant in the human mind the

lineaments and expressions of your own age, and transmit your heritage of grand ideas. As a labourer, or an artisan, you may contemplate your work at the close of every day and pronounce it good. As a voyager you may come to your journey's end ; as a discoverer you may add a new world to an old. Nay, in many pursuits the harvest exceeds the strength of the reaper or the carrier ; the net breaks, and much of the spoil has to be abandoned. The human race can hardly take account of the enormous acquisition. There is not a line of scientific discovery that is not now advancing at a pace that beats the laggard intellect of man with its imposing parade of mechanical appliances.

The moral philosopher is the one exception to the universal success. He may be good, he may be wise, he may be learned, he may be witty, and he may even show to advantage his own system of morals ; but hitherto he has simply added nothing to man's natural common-sense and the universal conscience. It little avails to tell the sailor that his best weather is something between a calm and a storm, and his best course is midway between the deep sea and the rocky headland. Moral systems have generally been propounded to select classes, with an absolute disregard of the requirements and interests of the outer world. Of course, if the philosopher tells a man he is entitled to all he can get by hook or by crook, that the law of the strongest

is the only way to settle differences, and that any single class may try conclusions with the whole human society, he will have followers to victory or to ruin, as may be. But no real honour or durable success is to be won by such theories. History only records by a terrible silence that philosophers do not regenerate the world. The very greatest of them had a chance in the formation of a noble and impressionable character with unique antecedents, position, and destiny. The youth he moulded and formed on the lines of the golden mean was not content with half a world, and failed to transmit that half to a line of successors.

In order to the completeness, universality, and depth of His condescension, and that He might be the same to the highest and the lowest, our Lord took no place, entered no class, assumed no rank, while declaring Himself Son of Man, and proving Himself Son of God. So long as He was in the flesh there was nothing to call a sect, a body, a union of any kind. There were sects, and parties, and movements in those days, and they all found it necessary to distinguish and consolidate themselves by particular tenets. Our Lord committed Himself to no faction, and would not complicate Himself in any cause.

What is unique in the person of our Lord, indeed unparalleled and inimitable, is the total absence of a special or partial character. It is the voice of all humanity. As many colours fuse into light, and are

necessary to its perfection, so God here speaks to us through every phase of human existence—every sorrow, every joy, every necessity, every rank, class, and employment, every relation—all in one sublime figure, always before us, and never to be dimmed or diminished by lapse of time or earth's longest distances. So as we keep our eyes on that form, that life, that death, those words, and those promises, we need fear none of those deviations and downfalls which have ever followed attempts to rouse and reform the world in common human fashion. In this continual light and abiding Presence the humblest peasant is as near his Maker and his Saviour as the most favoured child of earth.

Before our Lord came there was something to be said for a different expectation. Titles, rank, position, and high office have always been necessary to a high civilisation, and recognised as parts of the ordinary and natural course of human affairs. In fact, it may be plausibly alleged that the great truths of morality and religion are more usually found in the keeping of the upper classes. So why should not that which prevails and answers in the usual order of Providence be adopted in what may be called its legitimate fulfilment—the very consummation of the Providential order?

Grant that titles, rank, position, and high office are necessary in religion as in other matters of administration, competition is inevitable. From the

beginning to the end of time people will struggle for power and pre-eminence by all means, fair or foul, and in the pursuit of that which is good in itself will do things that their conscience must question and even condemn.

Had our Lord presented Himself equipped with all the social advantages that Palestine, Greece and Rome could have given, how would all the civilised world have contended for a share of the honours and actual place at so high a court! As it was, the bare announcement of the coming kingdom elicited much ignorant expectation and blind following, hot rivalry, fierce jealousy, impatience, and false hopes, ending in bitter disappointment. Nay, as it is to this day, not here only, but everywhere, the so-called prizes of the Church of Christ, necessary as they may be, are its chief scandals and offences. No enemy from without, no open and avowed persecutions and malignings, no rivals ready to smite, to destroy, and to rush in and divide the spoil, do the Church a tithe of the mischief done by those whose object is to intercept the grateful homage and free offerings of the faithful and use them for their own personal gratification or pride.

The one point on which there has always been and always will be an utter disagreement between the many and the few, or between the simple, rude, hard-faring and unlearned sons of toil, and the heirs of high estate and fortune's favoured sons, is that the former

will believe and must believe, whereas the latter will not believe and cannot believe, that all souls are equal in the sight of God, and that whatever He has done He has done for all. In the Book of Psalms, which expresses the life and soul of the Church of all ages, the Almighty is always represented as intervening to protect the poor from their oppressors—those oppressors being almost identical with the entire class above them, and having any power to do them good or ill.

True condescension means much more than the conscious act of stepping down from the higher level to the lower, and purchasing a higher degree by a course of self-abasement. It implies sympathy, fairness, open-heartedness, open-mindedness, a ready and complete recognition of all that is good in others, and the sense of obligation to those upon whom we are conferring a favour. The truth is, every good thing done in the world is the work of many hands, and can be good on no other terms. Woe to the man who thinks to do good to others in spite of themselves, without their consenting and conspiring aid, and in a manner to leave them debtors on his account! Woe to the poor creatures forced against their concurrence, or under the pressure of circumstances, into a mere submission to his autocratic insolence! They will never feel that which he expects them to feel; they will never be that which he intends them to be; the intended work will be his, and will remain his, and never be theirs. It will have his mark

and remain a token of their submission, that is, of their humiliation. The best work that man can do to man must receive voluntary and spiritual contributions from all who are to share in it, whether they give or count only as receivers.

It may be objected—indeed, has been often objected—that the condescension of the Saviour, as described by prophets and apostles, was not disinterested, but for a higher rank, a new title, a greater glory, an augmented empire. It has been said that our Lord made even more definite promises to those who would enter His service and share His sufferings. To confine ourselves to the exaltation alleged to be the motive of our Lord's humility, it is enough to say that it is simply impossible to conceive of good work without reward. Victory cannot fail of its triumph, conquest must be with acquisition, redemption will count the redeemed, the faithful Son rises in the love of the Father. What the Divine reality may be in these matters none can say, but the revelation must be as man can receive it. Even the ancient philosophers reckoned upon the earning of a surer and larger self-esteem.

XLI

THE THREE CATHOLIC CREEDS

THAT our Lord is Son of Man and the only Son of God rests, to the common apprehension, on firmer foundations than either the creeds or the letter of Scripture. For much more than a thousand years it was the faith and consolation of millions who never read or heard a chapter of the Bible, and never heard a creed except in an unknown tongue. These benighted beings received, and valued, and transmitted the fundamental truths of the Gospel quite as faithfully as we are doing who claim to be more favoured. No matter now how this was done.

On this point an objection will be raised. It does matter very much how a tradition has been maintained when that tradition itself is declared to be in the first rank of proofs, as having possession of the ground. Moreover, they that kept up the tradition are also in some degree responsible for the integrity of the documentary proofs, and still more for the interpretation of them. We will allow tradition to

come into court, as it is said, and to enter the witness-box, but we will retain the right to question the value of its testimony in every link of the chain, since a chain it is admitted to be.

But it is plain there can be no absolute necessity for testing every link in the chain of evidence, or every scale, every joint in the Christian armour. Were there such a necessity, it would indeed have been hard, not on the ignorant, but on the learned, whose whole time and strength would be taken up in a task continually drawing upon their faith, and still leaving everything dependent upon it. Theologians as we may be, grammarians as we may be, philosophers as we may be, we must still regard words, names, places, dates, and numbers as very light affairs—that is, light as compared with the gravity of the great questions before us.

The Church of England, so say a large class of its advocates, pre-eminently appeals to Scripture as against tradition, the pitfall of other Churches. But in point of fact the Church of England of our day appeals more to the creeds and to express declarations of belief than any other Church. To omit for the present its own distinctive creed, and much like matter, it exceeds all other churches in the prominence given to the Nicene, the Apostles', and the Athanasian creeds. They are sometimes called the Church's three noble creeds, and the Church of England evidently so esteems them. They stand, however,

on very different footings, and if any particular doctrine is to be built upon them, it becomes important to consider them separately.

The most historic and probably the oldest is the so-called Nicene Creed, the larger creed as it used to be called. We cannot complain that we do not know its history, but rather that we do, for we know it only too well. We are too well acquainted with the terrible, often sanguinary, struggles of rival emperors, bishops, orators, philosophers, and even cities, States, and races, contending for supremacy at the time when the nature of Jesus Christ was the one great political question. The battle had to be fought in the terms of the current philosophy, for there was no other language. To any unprejudiced mind this philosophy is essentially material, and the use made of it in the Nicene Creed is to bring spiritual truths to the test of what the Apostles themselves would have called carnal science. It is an attempt to harmonise texts, and put a construction upon them by the introduction of a new element bearing a suspicious resemblance to the possible 'new Gospel' against which St. Paul warns us, and the additional words deprecated by St. John the Divine. But, after an almost universal currency of fifteen hundred years, he must indeed be a bold man who challenges the coin, even if it bears the image of Cæsar on one side as well as the Cross on the other. If even the 'dumb ass' was for once the deliverer of a Divine rebuke, why should not the

stoic or peripatetic philosopher mingle one of his harsh notes with the great harmony?

As to the so-called Apostles' Creed, there can be little doubt it was never regarded as the original composition of any one author, place, or time, or as specially resting on the authority of any particular council or act of the Church. It came gradually into existence and vogue as the assimilation and common form of many briefer professions of faith. There is not a word of it that cannot plead Scriptural warrant, even though we may still ask, How can these things be? The sufficient answer to that is, that we may ask the same question of many other matters in which we have to be content, and indeed are content, with a partial satisfaction.

When we come to the third of these 'three noble creeds,' viz., that commonly called the Creed of St. Athanasius, we find a document of a totally different, indeed unique, character. It differs from the other creeds, first, as not being a creed at all in the chief part, but only in a sort of appendix or after-thought. It differs from the other creeds in matter and form, in style, in tone, in every possible point of comparison. It is an attempt to apply grammar, or logic, or mathematics, or philosophy, to the solution of a great mystery, by someone who did not know what grammar is, or what logic is, or what mathematics are, or what philosophy is, or indeed what the mystery is, or had just sufficient knowledge on these points to produce

a showy pretence of scientific theology. Great play is made with a succession of predicates, for which you have to supply the subjects and even the connecting verb.

'And yet they are not three eternals,' says the Creed. Three eternal what? Not three eternal gods. Not three eternal entities. Not three eternal things—though the pious and learned Tindal thought the word 'thing' the best and truest equivalent of *logos*. Of course, the author of the Creed intended the reciter to interpose mentally that they are three eternal persons, but had reasons for not himself using that expression.

The Church of England, which would seem to regard the document as not only a singular effort of faith, but also as a consummate work of theological art, has made two alterations in it to suit the English taste. It has rendered the word *immensus*, that is, immeasurable, by a word of quite different sense—'incomprehensible.' Of the two words, the Latin original is the least open to objection, for certainly we cannot measure the infinite God or His only Son. We may not think it a proper word to import into what really is a spiritual question, but since it is there we cannot dispute its truth. On the other hand, we certainly can make an attempt to 'comprehend' the Almighty and His only Son, especially if we use the word, as we do frequently, in the sense of apprehend, that is,

sufficiently comprehend, or comprehend to the utmost of our powers and our necessity.

We have all both mathematical and moral conceptions of Almighty God. To the former belong the ideas of infinity, eternity, omnipotence, creatorship, omniscience and omnipresence. Strictly speaking, we cannot comprehend these things, though we know what is meant by the words. But if a man is ever so little better than a brute or an idiot, he can fear God, or be in much awe of Him, and even love Him, and expect much good at His hands. This is to comprehend God, and, if our knowledge and faith carry us so far, it is to comprehend the Son also.

The next deviation from the original, to use a mild term, is much more serious, for it constitutes a decided attack on the orthodoxy of the Creed. Either the Creed or the Church of England must be quite wrong. In the original there is a remarkable change where the Creed passes from the attributes or properties of the Three Persons and of the Godhead to the title of the One God. The original runs thus: *Ita Deus Pater, Deus Filius, Deus et Spiritus Sanctus. Et tamen non tres Dii, sed unus est Deus.*

Here the words '*Et tamen non tres Dii*' may be rendered either 'and yet *they* are not three Gods,' or 'and yet *there* are not three Gods.' The former would perhaps be the more grammatical. But there can be no doubt whatever as to the rendering of the words '*sed unus est Deus.*' They can only mean

'but God is one.' The authors of the Creed shrank from dealing with the name 'God' as they had done with the words 'eternal' and 'incomprehensible.' Instead of the only possible meaning, the Church of England substitutes, 'And yet they are not three Gods, but one God.' This can only mean that Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. If there be any sense at all in this, it is that they make up one God, who is thus a composite God, made up of Father, Son, and Spirit.

For the present it is enough to observe that the Athanasian Creed, in the original, does not say this, and evidently shrinks from saying it. The Church of England does not shrink from saying it. Of necessity there arises the question, Which is right—the timidity, the inconsistency indeed, of the Athanasian Creed, or the audacity and recklessness of the Anglican Creed, which contains this very doctrine—heresy rather—and to favour it misquotes and mistranslates the Athanasian Creed? In this fraudulent way does the Anglican Church deal with a creed, or whatever it is to be called, which it professes to accept, to honour, and to admire, and which, as thus grossly mistranslated, it has now for three centuries forced on the consciences of an unwilling people under heavy civil penalties.

XLII

THEOLOGICAL POSITION OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND

WHAT, then, is the Creed of the Church of England? In other words, What is the English Churchman supposed to believe? Many answers may be given to this question, and, in fact, are given to it. Some will say that it matters little or nothing; some that it matters very much, for that eternal salvation depends on a right faith. Some will say that our faith is the Catholic faith, handed down by the Catholic Church, compared with Scripture, and kept in full accord with it. Some will say that it is Apostolic, or Nicene, or Athanasian, or Trinitarian. Some will decline inquiry into these titles, and take ground simply on Scripture, which they believe the Church of England to refer inquirers to in the last resource. On the one hand, the friends of the Church point with simple and indiscriminating admiration to 'our three noble creeds'—the Nicene, the Apostles', and the Athanasian. On the other hand, and in the way of disparagement, there are

those who tell us the Church of England has a dozen, or twenty, or ever so many more creeds, easily found in her services.

Perhaps the most sensible, if not quite logical, reply to the question is that the true and real creed of the Church of England is the fact, the life, and the practice of the Church of England. The Church consists of those who like it or are accustomed to it, whether born in it or adopted, already fashioned in accordance with it, and almost incapable of being anything else, unless it be nothing at all, which is a downfall possible in all cases. Thus it is plain the question can be treated seriously or not, rationally or not, as people please. Most clergymen, most Church school-managers, many theologians, some politicians, treat the question seriously, making not only the Church, but the Empire itself, dependent on a right faith, and prophesying all manner of ill if that heritage be not cherished and handed down to our posterity. Others treat the whole matter very lightly indeed, and wonder how anybody can imagine that the material welfare of nations depends on the acceptance of fables, exploded beliefs, and phrases that defy understanding.

As may be easily shown, there is more or less truth in every one of these answers, conflicting as they may seem. In any case, the answer presupposes something which it is best, indeed necessary, to take into account ; and it is better to assume all

men to be wise in their generation than all to be fools. Society is ever dividing itself into classes, castes, and cliques; and the greater religious denominations of this country have long since acquired as distinct and solid forms as so many Eastern castes. Of these denominations, that of utter unbelief is as offensive and defensive as any. It is an actual cult, though running in sceptical, critical, or simply negative lines. A Churchman seldom troubles himself to inquire into the faith of the Baptists or the Wesleyans, or even of the Unitarians so-called. Episcopalians and Presbyterians generally leave one another alone upon the doctrinal question. When the ordinary Englishman, of any persuasion, talks of Roman Catholics, it is as of a community bound by one allegiance, practising certain rites and ceremonies, and believing in certain superstitions. Their creed itself comes little into view; indeed, there is a vague idea that in the most important points the creed of the Church of Rome and that of the Church of England are very much the same.

In the interest of peace it is allowable to share this spirit of mutual toleration in the question of creeds. It is more than allowable—it is sometimes even necessary. If it is found impossible to make people care about creeds, or to see the difference between one creed and others, it is better not to sacrifice time, strength, and spirit on a fruitless adventure. There is plenty to do without going straight

to high theology as the one commanding position of all human thought and the citadel of truth. The Christian believes that all truth returns eventually to the Source of truth, and that we cannot be right in anything without being that step nearer the All-in-all. We cannot, or at least will not, be far wrong in the study of God's works, or of sound philosophy, or of history, or of politics, or of the sacred text; so it is not absolutely incumbent on everybody to be always driving at the supreme goal of human intelligence, the great mystery of the Godhead.

Early last century the moving spirits of the Church of England were stirred in that direction, and it was soon found that public peace and the dynasty itself were imperilled by the rising agitation. By something like a stretch of authority the rising clamour was silenced, controversy was shelved, and the vacant ground occupied by persuasive appeals, addressed rather to the heart than to the intellect, and calculated to humble rather than flatter the pride of human reason. Why may not the same be expected now? Why may we not leave the greater matters alone, and content ourselves with those within our reach, the unpretentious duties of private life, and specially those of the pastoral charge?

Unhappily for peace, the Church of England is not permitted to take this course. She is challenged at every point, and a rapid succession of great

changes in the internal government and administration of this country bring the challenge and the peril every year nearer home. It is the people now that govern. In many constituencies the majority of the people are not of the Church of England—that is, not of it actually and consciously, whatever they may be in a legal and hypothetical sense; and a large proportion of them are even violently opposed to it, and disposed to treat it as their forefathers once did the Church of Rome. It is hardly possible to conjecture what will be the tone and attitude of even the next Parliament towards the Church of England, much less of immediately-succeeding Parliaments, at a time when the approaching end of the century suggests the idea of turning over a new leaf in political and social progress. Add to this that theology has ceased to be positive science; it is now a branch of speculative and scientific inquiry. It has ceased to be a monopoly of the privileged classes; it is now a favourite study far outside that pale. Even at the Universities the forces for and against the Church of England, if not equally divided, are at least in the proportion of respectable antagonism. The two sides are sufficiently well matched to ensure that there shall be fair play, no social make-weights, no class leanings.

The Church of England should be the last to dread an appeal to the people, such as there now looms before us. For three centuries it has been writhing under the bondage of a State never in

harmony with either the theology of the learned or the religion of the poor. A Church which itself solemnly and continually protests against the submission of the Christian intellect and conscience to the See of Rome—at all events a living thing—finds itself bound by Acts of Parliament passed three centuries ago, under the authority, influence, and advice of princes, politicians, and divines certainly not above the average of their respective classes. It has ever been, and still is, a Mezentian bond, and that which claims to be the living Church of England is the mummified Church of the sixteenth century, that is, of this little corner of it. Besides the actors of that period whom we may be said to know, and know too well, there were authors, movers, and advisers, and actual results of which no account can be given. It is impossible to make out satisfactorily how the old services of the Church became what they now are, or how the old creeds of the Church were fused and transmuted into their present representative.

Hitherto there has been no opportunity, no means of mending what is confessed on all sides to have been an ill-performed operation. Neither the royalty, nor the aristocracy, nor the oligarchies, nor the wealth of this country, have been favourable to religious movements menacing the old social landmarks. The bias of the upper ranks has always been in favour of forms and phrases enduring long enough to be regarded as

heraldic distinctions. With the upper classes, religion itself has an irresistible tendency to become an amusement, a performance, a pretence for field-days, an interesting topic and even study, a convenience for such social purposes as the selection or rejection of desirable or undesirable acquaintances; in fine, for the usual objects of secular existence. For these and other reasons the Church may be only too happy that the people at large should have their turn in the settlement of these questions—the emancipated, untrammelled people, that have no position to maintain, no pedigree to show, nothing of their own to set against the absolute authority of Divine Truth and the right of man to find his way to it by the best means in his power.

XLIII

INFLUENCE OF THE ANGLICAN CREED

THAT which is here called the Creed of the Church of England—viz., the Creed of the Catechism and of the Litany—has had a most critical influence both on the successes and on the failures of the Church. It has won the support of the Pharisees, the Sadducees, and the Herodians—that is, of their English equivalents—and it has failed to win the people wherever the people have had the least power to take care of themselves. As its bearings and tendencies were never so latent but that they might have been provided against, and as the theologians of Queen Elizabeth's time were not wholly devoid of learning or wit, it may be well asked what prompted them to treat a very great question with such levity, to stake so much on so slight a contrivance, and to tell the world that it would answer every purpose, both here and hereafter, to say a few words to which nobody could attach any certain and definite meaning? How was it that universities, schools of learning, English and Continental theologians—and, as it is

alleged, Convocation—agreed to tell England that anything distinctive in Christian doctrine was wholly superfluous, and that it was wise, indeed necessary, to fall back on the simple idea of a God capable of various personifications?

Did the circumstances of the time described as the spacious days of great Elizabeth make it expedient, not to say necessary, to reduce the Creed of the Church to the simple idea of one Almighty Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, to be accepted in a language which dispensed with all critical consideration? There was philosophy in those days, and philosophers were then accepting the old creeds of the Church with an almost suspicious readiness. What was 'chief,' as the Catechism has it, was at least plausible. An intellectual summary of the Creeds could easily take a place in the rank of philosophic truths, or of probable theories.

The reduction of the Creeds to such a residuum certainly showed a singular temerity. It left out all that is comprehensible in the Creeds, and retained only the incomprehensible, with something like a studied slight on the rest. It left out all that Jesus Christ has done or suffered, and all that the Holy Spirit does in the constitution, guidance, and comforting of the Church. It reduced all spiritual existence to one eternal creative, salutary, and purifying activity. Can we really rest content with the idea of a solitary God, ready and able to create any number of intelli-

gent beings, to invest them with noble attributes, to save them continually from the consequences of their own aberrations, and to conduct them onwards to a high perfection, yet from all eternity doing nothing?

True, the mediæval theology was that from all eternity and in all space the Almighty Father had the society of Son and Spirit; but our Creed throws even that over, for it speaks of One God, Himself at once and alone Father, Son, and Spirit. Since we cannot agree, it seems to say, on the nature, procedure, and work of the Son and the Spirit, let us make the Father, Son, and Spirit all One.

What Christians may do under pressure of circumstances, at a perilous crisis, or in a great competition, is a matter for serious and painful inquiry. But it can hardly be supposed that any true Christian would willingly reduce his faith to an exceedingly abstract definition of the Almighty. The two so-called Catechisms which Newell had at last to crush for an ounce of gold or burn into a handful of ash, are two considerable volumes, testifying to his learning, his piety, and his regard for Scriptural authority. The abandonment of all that labour with nothing to show for it but this miserable *débris*, may remind one of armies so utterly destroyed as to leave just one to tell the tale; expeditions leaving no trace except in a few gnawed bones, and oriental dynasties whose whole history is comprised in one solitary coin. Indeed, we now know something about the great

Egyptian god, Amen, whom perhaps we still unconsciously worship; but the Creed of the Church of England allows us to know nothing about the great works of God for our salvation in the Old Testament, nothing about Jesus Christ, nothing about the Comforter whom He promised and sent.

It will be objected that the Church of England cannot be said to have a special creed or a national dogma, when it gives to all the creeds—for in truth there are many—more prominence than is given to them by the Church of Rome, or by any other Church. The *Te Deum laudamus*, for example, is a very full creed, and, at all events, does not hide or mystify the Divine Sonship. But any scholar knows the effect of a recapitulation or summary, or much in a few words. It is what most people are always asking for. 'Pray tell us,' they say, 'what this book, or this library, is about. We cannot follow long arguments, or give much attention to long stories. What is the drift of it all?' The philosophers of all ages have found it necessary to invent short and compendious statements of their doctrines and opinions, and these statements—a single line perhaps, or half a line—have survived and pass current, even when there remains no other trace of a life's labour, or of an entire school of thought. At this moment the creed of the Anglican Catechism and Litany not only professes to explain, it has in effect supplanted all the creeds of the Church.

The least questionable part of the Church of England Catechism is the summary of our duty to God and to our neighbour. The compilers had to be brief, compendious, and safe. They had to keep clear of many points in controversy as to both relations, for the two great opposites, then in frequent collision, differed widely in their sense of what was due to God and to our neighbour. As the two answers stand, there is not the scent of a burning question. But, seeing that the ground was made so clear, and the Pope and the Church were left out of sight altogether, there arises a question which seems to require some answer and is not easily answered. Surely the great example—the one perfect example—of duty to God and to man is our Lord Jesus Christ. Why did the compilers of the Catechism fail to point this out, and to rest the true significance of these duties on the fact that Jesus Christ led the way, performing them for us, and showing us how they should be done.

Is it possible, is it conceivable, that the compilers avoided a reference to the great example of duty in their anxiety to save the Anglican conception of Christ's divinity? Certainly, if the young catechumen had just been led to pronounce the Son of God absolutely one with the Father, and Himself Almighty God, he might not easily understand how he could do his duty to himself or to his neighbour. A mere child will read through all the Gospels without ever

feeling a moment's difficulty. He accepts supernatural agency quite as a matter of course. Any one who undertakes even a very young class in the New Testament will call its attention to the many striking and touching instances of love and duty to God and man in the life of our Lord, and will never find a difficulty himself or encounter a difficulty in the minds of the children under instruction.

It is a very old observation, and certainly justified by many instances, that religion and morality never fared well when they had been once separated. The ancient faiths gradually ceased to be moral, and became at last positively immoral, so as to be made to countenance any passion, indeed any abomination. Philosophy stept in to fill the dreary gap with abstract morality and sentimental truisms that did neither good nor harm. A man might imbibe ever so much of it, and be neither the better nor the worse. In the case before us, have we more than a philosophical theism? Have we more than a philosophical morality? Are they even put in accord? and do they run on the lines of the Christian Revelation? Is either Heaven brought down to man, or man raised up towards Heaven?

On the other hand can incomprehensible mysteries be arranged like a multiplication table? The statement cannot be more intelligible than the mystery

XLIV

THEISTIC INTERPRETATION OF THE ENGLISH CREED

OUGHT a creed to be intelligible to persons of ordinary intelligence? It is not sufficient to reply that no creed can be quite intelligible, inasmuch as it relates to what is beyond human intelligence, and the very subject of the Creed is incomprehensible.

Comprehensible and intelligible are not the same. We cannot comprehend eternity, but we understand a man when he calls a being or a thing eternal. We cannot comprehend the Divine operations, but we know what a man means when he says that the Divine operations have laws of their own, or avers his belief that an apple falls to the ground through the act of God so drawing it. Though the whole matter is incomprehensible, still we cannot help entering upon it; and we are bound to understand what we mean, and what others mean, when we say anything, or accept anything, on the subject. We are certainly bound to know what we mean by words which we impose on anybody who joins us in public

worship; who becomes a member of our Church, or brings a candidate for admission; who communicates with us at the Christian altar, or who, at that altar, seeks Christian matrimony.

Upon many serious questions, most of all in theology, and specially in the interpretation of Scriptures, it is allowable, and certainly honest, to confess ourselves unable to satisfy ourselves. But that rule cannot apply to the compulsory enforcement of newly-invented formulas upon the ignorance of half a nation and the organised resistance of the other half. For three centuries the Established Church of this country has been struggling, with the aid of the civil power, and the still more terrible weapon of a social ban, to force on all classes, be they learned or simple, stoutly resistant or meekly compliant, her own special explanation of the so-called Trinity. For the greater part of the present century her quarrel with the British public on this point, and this alone, has been year after year more and more bitter and more desperate. The more hopeless the contention, and the more miserable the consequences, the more has the Established Church avoided coming to what may be called close quarters as to the sense of her favourite dogma. In fact, not a single theologian of any note has ventured to present himself as its champion and exponent.

It matters somewhat where we begin, and what form of this Creed we take first in hand; but we

must take one of several forms. Let that be the Creed implied in the Litany, and expressly sung or said by the minister and the congregation in the four first invocations. The first of these invocations is: 'O God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.' Surely this must be that one only true God revealed to us and commended to our faith and obedience in the whole of the Old Testament. No book ever had so simple and so awful a subject, or urged it with such tremendous force and unerring consistency, as the Old Testament. That subject was One God, running through the whole of the sacred text, and emphatically declared in many hundreds of passages rising like the everlasting hills above the level plains. Surely this must be the One God, One only, of the first and three following Commandments. Surely this must be He to whom the one universal prayer of the Church from the beginning is addressed, 'Our Father which art in heaven.' Why the title 'of heaven' should be added in the Litany, and in no other occurrence of this creed, is a matter of history or of conjecture. Possibly it was from a not ill-grounded idea that the Lord's Prayer largely disclosed and more intimately defined the God of the Hebrews. Nothing, however, is to be inferred from the seeming antithesis between 'of heaven' in this clause, and 'of the world' in the next, for in truth God is everywhere, and wherever God is, there is heaven.

We have now to compare the first clause of the English Creed with the corresponding clause of the so-called Apostles' Creed : 'I believe in God the Father, Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth.' There is a considerable difference of expression, but it can hardly be imagined to constitute any real difference of belief. But the clause in the Apostles' Creed is so simply an account of One God Almighty that no Jew or earlier Israelite could possibly have objected to it. Indeed, he could have accepted it eagerly as an argument, according to his notions, against the rest of the Creed, though he might easily have been answered on that point, and, indeed, was answered by our Lord. There can be no doubt that the three clauses of the Creed in our Litany are designed to correspond to the three clauses of the Apostles' Creed, and that, in the first clause, there is nothing to disturb or to qualify that correspondence. We start fair, so to speak, from the first clause, with the thought of the one God Almighty common to both the Creeds immediately under review, and common to Jew and Christian.

We may here leave out of account that in the world at large, the outer world of ancient and modern heathenism, 'God the Father' never has been a simple idea meaning God Almighty, neither less nor more. Out of the range of Revelation mankind has found it impossible to conceive One God ; or, rather, finding that the very attempt to conceive the idea

would carry them out of their depth, they knew not where, far beyond their usual bearings, they adopted the word as we do the index of an unknown quantity. It seemed to do them no good—indeed, not to concern them at all—for they would be simply lost in infinity, under the feet of a Being whose head and heart would be above the spheres. But Fatherhood and Sonship are both far and near, and if they be once admitted they comprise, that is, they imply, all the varieties of vital existence. So the Greek and Roman theologians, following the track of Egyptian and Oriental theologians, adopted as the highest possible idea of God, God the Father—Jupiter, father of gods and men. How or why the enlightened worshippers of the highest and greatest approachable divinity tolerated an enormous mass of fantastic and incongruous additions, leaving the vulgar to worship whom and how they pleased, does not concern us, or rather it only concerns those who can employ themselves on the curiosities of religious faith and practice. For the present purpose we need only concern ourselves with one history and one theology, that of the Bible.

It is when we advance to the next clause—that is, the next invocation in the Litany—that a difference shows itself and a difficulty begins. Speaking for myself, as one must do in such a matter—for *credo* (I believe) is only a verb, indicative present singular, first person, and necessarily on egoism—I find it impossible to advance to the second clause without

carrying with me the sense of the word 'God' invoked in the first. Both clauses are addressed to God—surely it must be the same? Yet in the same breath almost we are addressing ourselves to 'God the Father' and to 'God the Son.' Him whom we just styled the Father we now style the Son, with an apparent antithesis, for we describe Him first as of Heaven, then as Redeemer of the world. Assuming the word 'God' to mean the same in both clauses, we suppose the One Almighty God to be both Maker and Redeemer of the world. As we shall see, there is no reason why we should not, but before we go on to that matter we must take the third clause.

Again, now for the third time, we invoke God; but this time as God the Holy Ghost. Assuming that the word 'God' in the three clauses has the same meaning—that is, that the God we invoke is one and the same God—then we suppose God to be Maker, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; nor is there any reason why we should not. But then comes a difficulty. This God, whom we suppose to be identical with the God just described as Father and as Son, we now declare to proceed from the Father and the Son, which certainly implies a distinction between Him and Them. As we shall presently see, even this admits of a certain explanation. Meanwhile, whatever difficulties there may be as to what it is which we here ascribe to the One God Almighty, there can be

no doubt as to the meaning of that name. We know Whom we are praying to. That being the case, we may deem it a matter of less significance what titles, honours, and offices we attribute to Him who is above all estimation, indeed beyond all human comprehension. However that may be in these three invocations, we do render to one and the same God three various attributes with corresponding offices.

Then comes the fourth invocation, the sum of the whole, and binding all the rest as in one sheaf. We now describe God as a Holy, Blessed, and Glorious Trinity, Three Persons and One God. Whatever the meaning of the new phrases imported into this solemn act of worship, there can be no doubt as to the last words. He whom we are invoking is One God, the same as He whom we invoked in the three previous clauses. How He should be a trinity, consisting of three persons, must be a difficulty. But still, as has been said above, there is at least one solution. It is more than the solution of a liturgical difficulty ; it is a truth which we do well to apprehend and search into and realise.

The noble lady in Homer says to the husband whom she is soon to lose—and with him also losing her only child—he is to her husband, brother, and friend, father, mother, and everything. God is all this good, not only to us, but absolutely, for He is the Author and Maintainer of all the domestic and social relations, and they are within Him before we

are permitted to share them by obedience to His will. No doubt the one God Almighty is Creator, Preserver, Father, Son, Redeemer, Sanctifier, Inspirer, the originator and perfecter of every good thought, word, and deed in the human heart. We may think of Him and speak of Him under innumerable names and offices ; His power, His very hand, is always in us ; His spirit is always proceeding from Him to us, through infinite channels, whatever and whoever they be. He certainly dwells with a constant, special, and assured indwelling in the hearts of those who have become bound to Him. We are nothing, we can do nothing, we cannot even feel, without Him, for it is He that does it in them that seek His offices.

This interpretation of the four invocations in the Litany reduces them to a perfectly simple and intelligible conception of the one Almighty God—the God of common parlance, of the commonest indeed, the God whom even the profane, or the heedless, invoke in their quarrels. Saints, sinners, apostles, prophets, evangelists, heretics, and schismatics agree in the conception of One God over all, in Whom and of Whom are all things. To us He bears many aspects ; He deals with us through many agencies ; He speaks to us in many voices, for though the voice be one when it leaves Heaven, it is refracted into very many by the time it reaches us. On mere abstract grounds it might seem as well to leave the matter standing

thus. Many excellent men, pious men, learned men, with some claim to be called theologians, have in fact taken their ground on this account of the Church of England Creed. They seem to think that all we know and all we need to know is that we can approach the One Almighty God, and regard Him in the offices and relations that bring Him home to our understanding and our affections.

As suggested in a former chapter, it is not impossible that this Creed was expressly framed to meet the views of powerful men, whether in Church or in State, who demanded a compromise between reason and faith, and who would be able to block any movement, any measure, and anything in the nature of a creed, unless they were met half-way. If, then, it is possible to suggest that this Creed is neutral and so far insignificant, what and where is the omission, if any? Most readers, it is to be hoped, will already have found something wanting. The Creed as thus understood omits Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It describes the Almighty as acting and revealing Himself through the Son and the Holy Spirit, but leaves the person and the personality out altogether. There is not here the distinct, individual Being whom we read of in the Gospels, nor that work of the indwelling Spirit which we read of in the Acts and Epistles. It is true that in the fourth clause of this Creed we speak of Three Persons and One God, but it has long been the growing practice of the Church

of England to identify this 'One God' with the God of the first clause, and consequently of all the clauses. This involves that fanciful conception of a certain dramatic mask or mere aspect, an appearance or personification, expressed by the word 'Person,' as if all that were meant or revealed was that God has shown Himself as Son and as Spirit, and has acted the several parts.

XLV

SUBORDINATION

WHAT is the great want in these days, perhaps in all days? What is it that can be said, not only to be shortcoming and insufficient, but hardly ever to be found? It is not the wish to be great and good, for that is taught everywhere, felt by multitudes, and exhibited in the lives of many. It is not that the grander parts and functions of the Christian State have disappeared from the thoughts, and conversation, and life of the people. It is not that Christians no longer wish to be, or even imagine themselves to be, emperors, kings, priests, deliverers, reformers, regenerators, founders, restorers, patriots, leaders, and benefactors, deservedly conspicuous in the records of achievement and the rolls of fame. This is still the broad way, and many there are that press into it. There cannot, indeed, be many who are so deluded by the near vision of actual power as to spend nights and days, as an old poet says, in the struggle to become chiefs of a party and of the State. But every-

body is reminded in these days that he is capable of pre-eminence in some walk of useful industry or of honourable enterprise. It cannot even be fairly said that Christ is not anywhere set forth to the people as their Redeemer, King, Priest, Lawgiver, Teacher, Advocate, and Friend. It might almost be said that there are too many who would be Christians in their own degree and fashion, and have at least their share and place in His Kingdom, Power, and Glory; some even to the evident diminution of that which is due to Him.

For centuries presumption, self-assertion, and progress by aggression, have been almost the rule of European life, of that life at least which comes uppermost and enters history. They have been so recognised as motives and principles of action, and the only possible way to positions of real value, that it is vain to dispute their rightfulness. You must push to the front, it is said, or fall to the rear. If you do not put your foot on your rival's neck, he will put his foot on yours. Even old Homer is quoted to countenance the advice to be ever foremost in the race. Life certainly may be considered as a game with its rules, and a fine art with its laws, aiming only to please and remunerate. But in all these matters, and in all human action, there is still a certain distinct and irrepressible idea of 'The Good,' as something which has an indefeasible right to present itself, to interfere, to speak, to warn, to lay down the law if necessary,

to moderate the violence of competition, and to point to something higher than earth can offer. So, in the midst of a wild hurly-burly of competing forces, there still appear good books, good sermons, good stories, good examples, good maxims—good in every form of pure goodness, from a philosophy to a nursery-tale ; and everybody can retire, like the royal innocent, from the thick of the battle of life to meditate on good things. What more is wanted ? What more is possible ?

The world, it is too true, asks for no more. It can do no more. It credits itself with original and inexhaustible sources of goodness, all of its own ; and, as it thinks, it knows how to make use of them. It finds much in the Bible to support its views, and the Bible it still recognises as being, on the whole, a good book.

But surely Christians ought not to omit altogether, as many books affecting a Christian character do, the continual submission of Jesus Christ to His Heavenly Father in all things. That indeed is wanting, or if not altogether wanting, yet kept far in the background of all our distinctively 'orthodox' theology. The Father has almost disappeared, as if He had abdicated, or wholly determined all His sovereign functions as regards man ; or, if He is recognised, it is to make of Him and the Son and the Spirit that monstrous and utterly unscriptural divinity, the 'Triune God.' But when the Father is no longer an object of

spiritual contemplation, with Him disappear also the filial character and relations of the Son.

Has there been collusion between the world and the Church? Has there been a compromise? Has the world said: Give up that continual, wearisome, degrading submission of Jesus Christ to His heavenly Father; that slavish obedience, that humiliating dependence; we are then ready to accept Christ as God on earth, representative of God, speaking for God, acting the part of God, as all good men do in one degree or another, one way or another? Such compacts there may be, even if it has taken centuries to make them, so secret, so stealthy is the origin and growth of error.

The work that passes under the name of Thomas à Kempis has a greater reputation and circulation than any other religious work. Though it is not known by whom, or when, or where, or under what circumstances it was written, it is evidently of the same theological school as that of Bernard and Anselm. A very industrious and thorough student of the book may perhaps find in it some reference to our Lord's continual appeals to His Father, but he will be fortunate if he does. When Christ points to Himself as an example of obedience, it is not obedience to the Father that is meant, but submission to the cruelty of man.

Such a comment on such a book may be thought to indicate some want of reverence and of modesty,

but truth obliges. The author begins with the very true remark that it is possible to dispute much about the Trinity without being the better man for it. But surely the Father, the Son, and the Spirit ought to be continually and distinctly recognised in the 'imitation of Christ.' Let any one compare the work with St John's Gospel, the great text of high divinity. It is about four times as large a book as that Gospel, containing four times as many verses. In the Gospel there are about 130 verses in which the Father is distinctly recognised as Father, and the Son as Son, the one performing, the other receiving fatherly offices. The form of the work has the look of being borrowed from Boethius on the 'Consolations of Philosophy.' That almost equally celebrated book is a conversation between the soul and philosophy, not much to the credit of either philosophy or the soul, but written in what is justly called a fascinating style, that is sufficient to carry a reader through perhaps a third of the volume. The 'De Imitatione' is a like conversation between the soul and Christ. Whenever the word 'God' or 'Lord' is used, it is always left studiously ambiguous and indifferent whether it be the Son or the Father that is meant; and nowhere is there any sign of actual relation between the Father and the Son. In an almost entire absence of either internal or external evidence, the least improbable suggestion made is that the book was written by Gerson, who took a leading part in

the Council of Constance, and is said to have had the chief hand in burning Huss and Jerome.

But what does this imitation of Christ become without a due sense of the obedience of the Son to the Father? It is liable to be an imitation in points which are either not within our own line of duty, or capable of exaggeration beyond our just bounds, and even our power. We cannot perform miracles. We cannot feed thousands with a few loaves. We cannot restore the dead to life. We cannot call men from their home duties and avocations, and send them about dependent on gratuitous hospitality. We cannot command a rich young man to sell all he has and give to the poor. We cannot fast forty days and forty nights. We cannot pronounce judgments with the certainty of speedy execution. We cannot consign whole classes to their certain doom. We can, indeed, make the attempt, but it will be with terrible consequences, and with a general failure.

Ever since theology took the place of revelation, and the Father was buried, as it were, in the foundations of the Church, for the Son to be put in His place, they that have rule in the Church have shown a corresponding disregard of their own derivative and responsible character. It has become their way to make the most of themselves and the least of the Christian flock, and to inculcate most the ideas and practices that subdue its energies, dwarf its intellect,

and restrain its independence. It will be replied that never were the sacred edifices on so grand a scale, the services so magnificent and popular, and the free-will offerings of the people so abundant, as during this very period—till, indeed, it became a public necessity to check them. But that much may be said of many false religions that never possessed or even sought power over the moral conscience. For a faith to exercise this power, and to make man better as well as more believing, it is necessary that the supreme object of faith should be seen in its true perfection with its moral and revealed relations.

The idea of subordination—and, as far as man can see, the fact—pervades the whole moral creation. Humanity occupies a place between the higher and the lower, with a grand investiture from the higher, a large dominion over the lower, and a consequent responsibility. The history of man is a descent from an unknown past to an unknown future, but continuing from the one and to the other. Within itself are endless gradations of authority and responsibility. Subordination is the rule alike of the family and of the empire, of the smallest commune, of the most trifling partnership, of the social circle, of the kingdom, of the republic, of the wildest adventure and the boldest enterprise. In all these matters, whether the highest or the lowest, should subordination fail and a wreck ensue, opinion looks to the higher links of the chain for the origin of the mischief. It rules that the head

must have forgotten its place and duties, or the body would never have sickened and rebelled. In truth the head has everywhere to set the example of subordination before it can safely demand it. When the matter is religious authority—that is, a personal example of faith and life—the invariable language is, 'Show us whence you have received, and we will accept. Show us whither you are going, and we will follow.'

What comes down to us from Heaven may be interpreted into a Divine commission, which we have conscientiously to transmit to those who are below us in the order of Nature, or of time, or of social degree, and who have to receive from us what we have received ourselves. Some will observe: We do receive our commission from heaven, for we receive it from Christ, and Christ is God. That is modern and mediæval theology. What St. John says is, that Jesus Himself received His commission from His Father, and transmitted it to His disciples.

XLVI

'GOD THE SON'

THUS far we have gone on upon the supposition that the first title in the Anglican Creed was to be identified with the first title in the Apostles' Creed, and in the Jewish Creed, as it is in the First Commandment and in the Old Testament, not now to speak of the New. We have supposed God the Father to be simply God. But our theologians would tell us at once that it is not so, and that this supposition would be to miss the point of the Anglican Creed. By the word 'God' in this Creed they do not understand God Himself in such a nature, saving the word, as that no other being can partake of it, nor do they mean a rank, or a quality, or a property, or deity, or divinity in the too wide and too common senses of those words, but a certain essence or substance common to Father, Son, and Spirit, whereby each may be truly called God. Every sensible Christian deriving his faith from the Bible, jealous for the honour of God and of the truth, cannot but feel very suspicious of such conceptions.

He must think them at the best only expedients for getting over the difficulties inherent in the subject, or at least for furnishing a reply to those who desire full satisfaction upon them. What seems to be intended in this case is such an interpretation of a title as shall make it both incommunicable and communicable; absolutely confined, if we would avoid peril of blasphemy, to the One God, but yet to be extended, if we would save our souls, to the Son and the Holy Spirit.

On such a subject one has sometimes to anticipate and to meet by the way objections which, in a certain class of minds, would bar all further comparison of views. It will be said, 'Oh! you own yourself not an Athanasian, and consequently not Catholic, and not a believer in the Trinity as the Church has ever held it.' For the present it is quite enough to observe that the expression 'God the Son' is not to be found in any of the writings of Athanasius or of any other Father, or in any creed whatever, except the one immediately under review, or in any utterances of the Church Catholic; for, whatever the merits of the Church of England, we are indeed in a woeful case if it is to be held identical with the Church Catholic.

A great man in the early part of last century—as well known, perhaps better known, in science than in theology—who wrote certainly with a clear head, though not always in the style befitting his subject, protested energetically and persistently against the

Anglican Creed. When he had occasion to state the doctrine of the Trinity—that is, the doctrines comprised in that title—he began 'God the Father,' and procceded 'the Son of God.' His self-styled orthodox contemporaries pronounced him at once a confessed heretic, inasmuch as he evidently shrank from ascribing to the Son the same divinity as to the Father, and denied that they were equal in the Godhead. A perfectly impartial Church writer of our times simply states the fact, leaving his readers to put their own construction upon it.

Here there are two quite distinct and different meanings that may be ascribed to the word 'God' in the Creed of the Church of England, and that will be severally ascribed as people are simple or learned. Beginning with 'God the Father,' simple folk will believe themselves to be addressing that One God Almighty whom they are wont to address day by day as 'Our Father which art in Heaven.' On the other hand, those who have been carefully instructed in the Church Catechism by competent Church teachers will suppose themselves to be addressing a Person of the Trinity, which, or whom, they shortly pronounce to be One God.

Perhaps it would not be quite fair to say that a creed of which the chief word is capable of two different meanings has therefore no meaning at all. But it certainly is not wise, or kind, or pious, to disturb the proper simplicity and repose of true

Christian worship with needless perplexity as to the meaning of their words and the nature of the Being to whom Christians are addressing themselves. Many a cherished text of Holy Writ describes the Almighty as putting down the mighty from their seat and exalting the humble and weakly. But the very opposite must be the result of using words in such a way as to bear perfectly different meanings, one of them at least absolutely unintelligible. In such a case the high-minded and clever will be apt to plume themselves in the exclusive possession of a grand secret intelligible only to men of their own culture and calibre, while the lowly and simple will be content to hope for the day when they will understand these things better.

It will be said, however, that we have to deal with a difficulty not of our own making, and that we have only to make the best of it. The difficulty is, that if we are to believe the Bible at all, or the Church at all, we must ascribe to Him whom we worship as the Son of God a divinity surpassing all human measurement and comprehension. We cannot call Him simply man. Then what else are we to call Him? His place is not in any order of service or finite existence known or revealed to us. We believe Him to be perfectly good, and He has Himself told us that God alone is good. Theologians follow the track thus opened to their view, and argue that God Himself cannot create a perfectly good man, or make a man

perfectly good in spite of himself—that is, without his own contribution to the work. So it is argued that a perfectly good being must be of God, and as God can suffer no partition or distribution, must be God, partaker of His actual essence or being.

Such a mode of reasoning leads one to ask with fear and trembling whether the Almighty can be resolved, and defined, and laid open to view, by theological science, as it is proud to call itself. We certainly cannot bring the Almighty within the reach of mathematics; and when we try the logical method, it is only to discover that everybody has his own logic, and everybody ends accordingly where he begins. If there is to be any difference as to reception of divine truths between the learned and the unlearned, Scripture—indeed, our Lord's own words lead us to hope that the want of earthly wisdom is not so very great a disadvantage.

There are expressions which, we are bound to allow, have great significance and which convey the idea of an impartible identity, such as that all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in our Lord bodily. But such texts are not necessarily to be admitted in any meaning a theologian may give to them, for if all Scripture has to be searched and sifted, so has every word in it, as any scholar must know.

XLVII

THE GREAT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Is not the rational way to approach these questions also that which is most natural? How, then, do we all, in the course of Nature, approach the great question of the being, the powers, and the character of God Almighty? We have no choice but to approach through our knowledge of man. In the great theological school of human life and daily intercourse we learn what men can do, and what they are; what love is, what hatred; what truth is, what falsehood; what generosity is, what meanness; what holiness is, what reverence is, what respect is, and so through the whole circle of moral sentiments.

We all are scholars in this school. We all have to learn from our fellow-scholars, and from the books put into our hands, the records of humanity, the lessons of Nature, and the revelations of grace. This is our school, and we have also a Master, for the voice of God has been heard amongst us from the beginning. Human occasions, human guides, and human patterns, are necessities of our spiritual growth, and it

must be through our brothers that we have seen that we rise to the knowledge of the Son and the Father whom we have not seen.

Any one must indeed have been cast in very hard lines if he has not known one or two very good persons whom he gladly, indeed unconsciously, credits with all the virtues in a very high degree. It is one of the rewards of goodness that it disposes a man to make the best of things, and to see in others that which agrees with his own noble disposition. Even if he be sometimes deceived, it is a happy and wholesome self-deception—hardly a deception, indeed, for in that case a man admires that which is to be admired, and loves that which is to be loved, even though he be blind to that which is not to be admired or loved. But we need not stickle about the more or less in this matter, or about the soundness of our estimates. It is enough that we, at least most of us, believe in the existence of good men. If we are good children, we believe our parents to be good; if we are good brothers, we believe our brothers and sisters to be good; if we are good citizens or good subjects, we are sure to find in public life some men whom we regard as true patriots, great statesmen, disinterested reformers, or heaven-sent deliverers.

Now how does the goodness of these good men, or say the goodness we credit them with, weigh in comparison with the goodness of Almighty God? The first answer a religious person will be apt to give

is 'Oh! nothing at all.' That is what may be called the orthodox reply, such as any good child would give, or any one happily not yet emancipated from the traditions of childhood. But in real life these good men do not talk as if they were just nothing at all, nor would their lovers and admirers admit themselves to have fixed their affections on shams or nullities. On the contrary, they who occupy any social pre-eminence, and have to teach or to lead, act and speak as if they were very good, as good as can be, as honest as can be, as disinterested as can be, as true as can be, and as right as can be, without flaw or shortcoming. Their admirers and lovers take them at their word, and there ensues much of what is called mutual admiration. Now this is a plain necessity, and there must be some truth in it. There really is such a thing as goodness. The Christian believes this is a really good thing, a good gift indeed, and that it comes from God Himself, who is thus visibly represented in the words and acts of good men.

But when a Christian, who is no longer a child, or thinks himself no longer a child, begins to consider how far the teaching of Nature and the lessons of experience can justify the conception of a being at once Son of Man and Son of God in a sense proper to Himself, he finds difficulties, at least if he is on the look-out for them. All religion has a tendency to deify man and to humanise God. But has

the world generally agreed in its notions of either a good man or of a good deity? How can goodness, in the vaguest sense, be thought necessary to the conception of a God? Do the descriptions and images of supposed gods, or the functions ascribed to them, bring us at all near our notion of a good man, or always of a man at all? Of our fellow-subjects in India, what proportion are monotheistic—that is, believers in an undefined deity, represented by human prophets or law-givers, and what proportion are polytheistic—that is, believers in deities, good, bad, and indifferent, and more or less deviating from the human form? Sad to say, we have to look at home. Not to speak of our Continental neighbours, is the general English conception of God that which a man will naturally acquire by the practise of goodness and his observation of it in other people?

But there are other difficulties in the way. How can goodness be regarded as the natural and appointed way to the right conception of the Deity, when many children have been good from the earliest opportunity they had of showing it, have been so ever since, and are so now; while the reverse is equally true, and there are thousands who seem to have been born bad, and likely to die no better? What are we to say to the badness of the family, of the class, of the locality, or of the whole race? Are we to say that God, if there be a God, has condemned these persons, these families, these localities, these employments, these

races, to incurable and unchangeable badness? If so, where is their fault? Where, too, is the merit of those who are necessarily good and cannot help it? Are we to go further, with many in this island, and believe that God has created the former for wickedness and for everlasting torture, and the latter for goodness and everlasting happiness? If so, is this a good God or a just God, in the sense of a good man or a just man?

But granting the facts, what is their real significance? They appertain to the actual state of the human race, and have to be taken fully into account. Certainly it is lamentable that people, whether particular persons or whole classes of them, should seem destined by birth and circumstances to courses and degradations below the lowest of humanity, and to conceptions of the Deity only too much in accordance with their character and surroundings. Let us suppose these unfortunate people to be supplicants at the great court of our common humanity. Who will help them? Who will comfort them? The materialist or the evolutionist can only regard them as developments, and heartily but ineffectually wish them a turn the other way. The unbeliever cannot promise them either Providential or spiritual aid, or a merciful judgment, or compensation in a future state. The Christian alone is not out of place in the matter. He alone need not be disheartened, or unpitiful, or unpractical. He may admit sad inequalities, irre-

sistible influences, and even congenital infirmities in the way of goodness. He sees in them occasion for Christian effort, and for the Divine mercy. He recognises a Power equal to all difficulties, and a system large enough to meet what is due to all inequalities and all deserts. Since this cannot be accomplished here, he concludes that, of a certainty, it will be hereafter.

That is the Christian's faith, and it is his continual consolation and support. But he has to cherish it rather than parade it. When it comes to argument, the unbeliever is always a step in advance: for, while the believer rests content where he is, the unbeliever, by the law of his own nature, precipitates himself from one negation to another. He replies: 'This is the way of you all. It is the old folly of fools and the old trick of deceivers. They were always promisers. Give us all you have to-day and we will pay you to-morrow. It is a new version of the Greek Kalends that never came. We have to make the best of things as they are, and leave this imaginary future to those who find themselves unequal to the present state of things. We shall never be better, either in ourselves or in our condition, than we are here.' Perhaps the Christian's best answer is to talk less and to be and do more.

XLVIII

SONS OF GOD

SONS of God there are many and various, though there be only One who may be called 'the Son of God,' or the 'Only Son,' or the 'Only Begotten Son.' There are exalted beings of whom we know little indeed, except that they witnessed the creation of the world and rejoiced in it. There are angels—that is, ministers of God with special powers, special functions, and for special purposes. There are those who have been admitted to covenant with God, as in our Catechism all baptised persons are described as children of God. When used in the plural, by sons of God we understand those who have plainly made some advance in obedience and holiness, and who deserve the title they have received, as it were, in anticipation. To some extent they are what they are bound to be. They are in covenant; they have received the gifts of grace, accepted them, and made them their own. In what relation do they now stand to the Father of light, the Fountain of life, and the Giver of all good gifts?

Goodness we believe to be the work of God, the gift of God, and in this way the very presence of God in the heart of man. We also believe it to be the act and habit of the person in whom it appears. We believe not only in God as the Author and Giver of all good gifts, but also in the good man as the actual recipient of these gifts and abode of the Giver. We do not believe the good man to be a mere representation of Divine goodness, a mere reflex or medium through which God is refracted to us. We believe God and the good man to be absolutely distinct, each an individual, though the One is omnipotent and perfectly good, and the other, comparatively, only as clay in the hands of the potter, and possessing no higher power than that of receiving the good gifts of God and doing His will.

Now, if we do not think at all about the matter, but take ordinary language in its common sense, there is, in fact, no difficulty. The religious ploughman, who cannot even read, who does not know what is meant by theology, and has never heard of the Fathers or the Councils, sees no difficulty in an Almighty God who can and does make people good, and in a man submitting, obeying, and praying to be good, and so becoming good. If anything, he inclines to that view which is the most difficult—viz., that which shows God the most masterful, man the most passive. But if he takes the most necessitarian view of the Divine operations, he never abandons the belief in two dis-

tinct persons as regards himself and God. In this he finds no difficulty. It does not occur to him.

Yet, if people think about it, there must be a difficulty. 'Better then not think about it,' some will say. But many have to think about it, whether they wish it or not. If they are to teach or to be taught, or if they have to explain creeds, or to encounter what they think erroneous and dangerous doctrines, they have to think well over the matter before us, and at least see the difficulty, if they cannot remove it. They must regard every man as having an independent will, and an unlimited power to work out his own salvation, always in the presence of another independent will—that is, the will of Almighty God, who worketh in us to will and to do of His own good pleasure. The better the man, the greater is the difficulty of distinguishing, if possible, if allowable, between the work of God and the work of man. As regards any man's own relation to God, the difficulty increases, and the dangers increase every step he takes God-ward. If he studies honestly to please God, to be after God's own heart, and to do as God does, so he feels more and more that God is all in all, and that man is but the recipient of His gifts and the instrument of His will. All the men who have stepped out of the ranks, advanced to the very front, and challenged the giants of sin and error, have believed their cause to be God's cause, and themselves for that work in God's place. They have believed their words and

deeds to be inspired in the extreme sense of that word. If they have made mistakes in the sight of men, they have generally thrown the responsibility on the Almighty Mover and Author.

This raises the question between one will and two wills. Granting that true servants of God and all good men are, for the time and occasion, doing the will of God, are we to say there is one will in the matter, or two concurrent wills? That is a question familiar to many theologians and other thoughtful people. It is a sad truth—sad, though with some happy consequences—that the best men and the most eminent and successful servants of God have had their full share of faults, personal faults, derogating from what claims they might have to a really God-like character. In all the long roll of Christians, saints, and heroes there is not one without blemishes. But we are free to overlook their blemishes, or, at least, to imagine, not a perfectly good man—for we are positively forbidden to imagine that—but a 'good man,' a 'really good man,' a 'thoroughly good man,' such as one may have been so fortunate as to light upon in the course of a long and wide experience, probably running his godly race far from towns. Of course we do not for an instant believe that our supposed 'good man' had lost his individuality. He remained simply good Master So-and-so, or good John So-and-so, and nothing more. Even if his goodness pervaded every act of his life, he was still the man

we know, or imagine, by that name. The very goodness of the good man, and the very saintliness of the saint, have always been believed to have been formed by a continual and increasing submission to a higher will—that is, the will of the Almighty. Holiness always has been accounted a service, even when it had come, in a sense, to cast out fear, and to use towards God that plainness of speech which good men are privileged to use to one another.

It is true that there have been at times great and heated controversies as to the existence of free-will; but those controversies really did not go beyond the paper they were written or printed on, for they never found an echo in the intelligence of ordinary Christians. The universal judgment of the Christian Church of all creeds and communions is that a man has free-will; that he has to choose, and can choose, between good and evil; that he justly suffers the consequences of an ill choice, for it is his own act and deed; and that he never has a just quarrel with the Almighty as having exercised an overpowering force over him, as it were, and taken his place in the course of human action. The violent passions, the tumults, the storms, the atrocities which seem to deform religion in all ages, testify to a universal and unshaken belief in the complete responsibility of every human soul. Nature, it has often been observed, is cruel and unpitying; but we are not angry with her, we do not attempt to punish her, nor do we defame her

because she has done us great and irreparable injury. We cannot hold her accountable—that is, possessed of a distinct moral individuality. But the strictest advocates of the necessitarian dogma have not hesitated to punish with ruin and death itself their opponents, who, upon their own theory, could not help saying or doing what they said or did. Thus the very theologians who insisted most vehemently on irresistible grace, and the irresistible domination of the Almighty, themselves the most emphatically testify to the freedom of the human will.

Wearied with the controversies in which he found himself a house divided against itself, Milton made them the never-ending occupation of an order of beings for whom they had no longer any practical significance. He allowed the doomed spirits to wrangle about fate and free-will, so as he could himself be spared the infliction. But as nobody was more decided in his estimates of personal character, or less disposed to arraign heavenly justice, he must be supposed to have fully recognised that freedom of will without which man cannot be either right or wrong.

XLIX

PERFECTED HUMANITY

As we advance towards that which is past man's understanding, being both of God and of ourselves, it must be from the side of simple humanity. We cannot reason from the unknown to the known ; we cannot help reasoning from the known to the unknown. It is from that quarter that Nature and history have prepared mankind for the greatest of revelations. Man has to consider well what he is, and how he has come to be what he is, before he can frame his mind for a steady upward gaze at the Divine radiance. The words we have to use, the measures, the modes of reasoning must be human, for we have no other, unless we claim such gifts of the Spirit as shall dispense altogether with the use of our natural faculties. So it is now asked again, though it has been asked before, How do we, in fact, approach the conception of One who is Son of God in a sense applicable to no other being within our knowledge? Some such a conception we must have in our minds before we can expect to recognise its

fulfilment in the Person presented to us. Nor can it be objected that this is not the Scriptural order, for it distinctly and emphatically stated of some of Christ's disciples that they found in Him what they had expected; and where it is not stated it seems to be implied. But we have to ask, What it was that they expected.

Nature and Providence are always leading up to the idea of a perfect state of human affairs, and therein of a perfect man, who, as a good man is a son of God, would be singularly, or at least pre-eminently, the Son of God. It is the one expectation in which it may be said all sects, all schools, whether of belief or of unbelief, most agree. Be the hope ever so deferred, the heart of man sickens not of it. The infinite variety of human action, human character, and human circumstance always leaves a large and fertile remainder of expectation. The world is to be regenerated and perfected by laws, by schools, by societies, by institutions, by philosophies, by crusades, by movements, by striking out new paths, or by reverting to old ones. The coast is ever clear in one quarter of the compass or another.

Such is the current of thought, feeling, and hope that has always been flowing from some aboriginal fount, continually fed by golden promises, fresh beginnings, dawn upon dawn, happy inaugurations, favourable breezes, and all we understand by progress and improvement. It is as that tide in the affairs of

man which, it is supposed, every living soul and every community may avail itself of if it only be prompt to seize the opportunity. The common tideway of an indefinite expansion and advancement is open to everyone who has a thought beyond the gratification of his particular wants and his daily necessities. All men have to rise or to fall, to be better or to be worse, to have their place and share in the elevation of the human race, or be out of it altogether.

This undying and ever-returning vision of a golden future may take its manner and fashion from any one of the many schools of thought founded on circumstances of birth, class, or education. It is, indeed, very far from uniform or even consistent. The Churchman has one dream, the statesman another; poetry soars above, or at least outside, both. Every profession and occupation has definite notions of its own. Latterly the working-man has come to the front, apparently in the full conviction that he alone possesses the secret of national regeneration. Such a rivalry of pretensions cannot but be disagreeable to all who stand upon their special claim to understand the question—that is, to know best how the world is to be saved and the kind of men that are to do the work. But the question concerns the many, and the many have a right to a hearing Indeed, it may possibly be one day found out that the many have been too much overlooked in the matter, and that it is from the many that the saviours

of society are to come. Nay, it may even appear that the Church has not sufficiently taken into account that the Son of God in His humiliation was one of the many—indeed, a working-man.

Thus the hope of a continual advance towards perfection in the human individual, in Governments, and in the entire human race, however lightly treated of by some writers, however despairingly by others, is a matter of history. That the hope is natural and imperishable rests on the testimony of the continually disappointed, while for the justice of the cause we have always the last words of the defeated. True, there has never yet ceased to be a conflict between the everlastingly good and the everlastingly evil, and the most common result has been a sorrowful appeal to a higher tribunal than erring man. But whatever the sword has not won or the sceptre has not fulfilled, the poet, the philosopher, and the divine have quickly recovered, and what was yesterday blasted and scarred, to-day blossoms with fresh expectation. Each succeeding age looks wistfully to the next. The nineteenth century has had its full share of the visions which some tell us are the *fata morgana* of a deceptive atmosphere, others the dawn of a better day. The young prefer to think the human race youthful and vigorous, that man is a rising power, and that time has not yet told all he can do and be. Theirs must indeed be an evil star, or they must have been cankered in the very bud, who do not

start with this universal concurrence of joyful impulses.

But by the time the youthful imagination is found to have somewhat outgrown its just province, and realities have begun to take the place of ideas, all have to witness, indeed themselves to take part in, a continual reduction of theoretical estimates to a lower and still lower level. Even thus we can better appreciate the really good and discern more clearly that which is spiritual and eternal in the mixed natures around us. We better understand the trials by which some advance from strength to strength, and we distinguish their several excellencies by knowing the respective tests. We have, too, our own trials, and maybe have thriven on them. Thus we never quite give up the idea of a really and thoroughly good state of human affairs and of a really good man, even though we have to admit that it has never been realised. The belief is in us, and we cannot but ask who it is that has implanted it, nourished it, and made it grow under great and increasing difficulties.

It is true that ideals differ. There are national ideals and the ideals of human excellence that may be said to mark the age. They cannot all point equally to one ideal that may be thought unique and divine. What may seem a still more serious objection to any argument founded on ideals, is that no poet has ever yet invented a perfect character, and no historian has ever found or forged one. In poetry,

in fiction, and in history the chief figure is the one universal failure. He is shadowy and statuesque, hardly consistent enough to be inconsistent, and never enough in the right to be wrong. He exists chiefly in the neutral sense and the passive mood. He is made up of accidents and adventures, and is not so much a unity as a succession of more or less congruous reappearances. Thus, while the dramatist tries to raise our interest by enlisting our sympathy for one personage rather than another, and by making the plot a triumph of virtue in some one of its popular forms, he breaks down hardly yet midway in the ascending scale. Yet perfection there must be, so we all feel—perfection in man and things—and it is something to have fostered the hope and passed it on to happier times.

The long and wearisome annals of the human race are gratefully relieved by many names sufficiently above the level to provoke the questions, who and what they are, whether they are entirely of ourselves, what was their occasion or their call, and what place are they now to occupy in our minds. There is no place or time, no country, no religion in which these questions have not been frequently asked, indeed frequently answered decisively, often precipitately. In the most conspicuous examples of human greatness there has generally been what may be called a happy combination of vigorous, sometimes beautiful, qualities, susceptibility, and self-reliance; circum-

stances calling for a leader of the single-handed, if not always single-minded, sort; capacity without diffuseness, intentness without onesidedness, spirituality, or geniality, or wit of some homelier kind; a destiny discernible enough to be invoked on occasion —a crisis, a revolution finished or to come, an effete dynasty, or a hopeless entanglement. For the most desperate social or political maladies Providence has its fitting remedies, drastic indeed, when alteratives have failed.

There never yet has been found wanting the man who saw, came, and conquered. He represented the cause, the just Nemesis for some wrong, the righteous indignation of an oppressed people, the cry of a persecuted faith, perhaps even the cup of vengeance slowly filled, but now to be poured forth on a whole land or half the world. In not a single case has it entered into the mind of any, unless it be some obscure fanatic, that the person thus raised to do the work of the day or the hour was more than man or much more than most men. It is allowable, perhaps inevitable, to suppose that they had their missions, their just causes, their inspirations, their revelations, and their divine guidance; but they had no more divinity than has been ascribed as a matter of course to a Babylonian monarch, a Macedonian conqueror, a Roman emperor, or any one strong enough to assume a more than earthly rank and compel at least a silent submission.

It may be said that belief in divine pretensions was still easy, not to say reasonable. There remained far down even into Christian times a belief in families of divine origin and in deified humanity. But Mahomet himself—who fell as a plague over a third of the Christian world, and undoubtedly, in the corrupted state of Eastern Christianity had a mission, a cause, and a work to be done—never claimed, never received, greater honours than those which we all attach to the large and diffusive idea of sanctity.

What, then, should these persons be to whom the world is under such great obligations, and to whom we cannot help rendering a certain homage? The ancients found no difficulty in the matter. The gods, or whatever other Power ruled the elements, had given these men noble natures, sublime spirits, something in them certain to force its way through all obstruction, to rise to the purer atmosphere breathed by the immortals, and be admitted to their company. There was no thought of the vulgar herd, by the mere exercise of the domestic virtues, climbing heaven's steep, mobbing the celestials as they sat at their banquet, and interchanging social pleasantries. Not even were the Elysian fields, with their meadows and groves, for such poor cattle as the tillers of the soil or the slaves of the household. For such beings the best that could be wished was that they should die, forget, and be forgotten alike by gods and men.

It plainly followed that the great question which

stirs the present generation to the quick—What is the future of the soul?—was not a question of and for the human race, but only of and for a very select few who had the capacity for a new development. That capacity itself had in it a certain suspicion of divinity, and so far it offered some hope to such poor earthlings as might choose to entertain it at the requisite cost. But as far as the old religions went it was an affair of caste, and the poets and orators who discourse so beautifully of the joys in store for the choice spirits of earth had no wish to believe otherwise than that they would leave the multitude below, condemned by the laws of gravity and stupidity to a rapid subsidence and an ever-closed grave.

Thus, while there always has been the idea of perfected humanity, it never yet has been worked out, never yet realised by attainment or discovery. Goodness has always been regarded as the scent of the rose, as the grace of youth, as the indescribable harmony of sweet sounds. How it came, whence it is, whither it goes hence, and whether it has any real and abiding existence, are matters either of doubt or of airy criticism. Indignant as the world may be when it is sternly admonished to call no man good, it really never has called men good with either much enthusiasm or a moderate unanimity. The Christian orator or historian still finds goodness a metal so soft that it has to be alloyed with a stronger stuff, and a flavour so insipid that it has to be spiced for the

jaded palate. It is not enough for a man to be good; he must be great and good, or at least have that which shall strike the imagination as well as approve itself to the reason, and so win its way to the heart. Finally, it must have a sphere, and that must be a grand one—and we must be interested in it.

Though educated people may discuss the question as if they stood on Mars' Hill, or before a Council, few even of our own countrymen know anything about theologians, philosophers, histories, and schools of thought. Most are at the mercy of their surroundings, in which there may, or may not be, good examples or competent instructors. Nothing is sadder than the downward possibilities of a remote village, or an overgrown population. But they are as dear to the Almighty as Capitals and Universities. Who and what should He be that is to bring the Almighty to the head and heart of the simplest folk? The good news, for such it is, must be suited to all natures and all circumstances. For the new making of the world, the best man in the world would be insufficient. He must be also Divine.

L

MESSIAH

THE title of Messiah, or Christ, represents an expectation such as is found in no other instance, and which had an important part in forming the Jewish history and character. From extreme antiquity, and under the greatest variety of fortune, they clung to the hope of a glorious development, comprising the whole earth in its sphere, under a heaven sent and fully qualified leader. Leader after leader appeared and did his work, but the greatest of works remained to be done. As the conception of the work became loftier and more spiritual, so too did the idea of him who was to be charged with it. Like the rest of the world, the Israelites had large and diffusive ideas on creation and other Divine operations; and to this day it is a question whether they generally understood by the first commandment a denial of the existence of other divine beings, or the prohibition of their worship. However some might interpret the commandment, or the patriarchal tradition, it is too evident that the mass of the people were always

ready to add to it something of their own or from their neighbours.

The work to be done was manifestly Divine. So, indeed, had been the work of Moses, of Joshua, and even of the Judges. When the hopes of Israel centred in David, and in Solomon, to be partially fulfilled, yet more evidently disappointed, there came in the higher and more definite conception of a Divine Being in a certain relation to the one God Almighty. Yet he was to be of the house and lineage of David, and therefore a man, and as such liable to serious errors, not to say utter default. This would militate against any distinct idea of divinity. Nor is there any reason to suppose that in early times such an idea was extensively entertained. Even the temporal claims of the house of David were set at naught by the Ten Tribes.

Whatever might be the expectation of some inspired servants of God, led by special revelations, it would not appear that in our Lord's time the higher-class Jews expected the Messiah to be more than a man, or even so great a man as David. He would have to work stupendous miracles, but, as in the case of the Lawgiver, the Judges, and the Prophets, the miracles would attach more to the work than to the man. The High Priest assumed the expected Christ to be the Son of God, but that would be in his case an indefinite and simply traditional use of the expression. The expectation of the man accorded with

the work to be done. So far as we are told, it was to be no more a spiritual work than the conquest of Canaan had been, and did not require more than another Joshua on what might be called a grander scale. Nevertheless, even by human agency, with the Divine aid, the world was to be politically reconstituted and socially reformed, so as to fulfil on the highest possible scale and to the greatest possible perfection the idea of the Jewish polity embodied in the Law and developed by the Prophets. How this was ever to be done, except by one who was man—the man, seems to have been regarded as a minor question by those whose personal interests and whole position depended on the sufficiency of the Law and the duty of its maintenance.

But even the Scribes and the Pharisees could not but read in the Law and the Prophets much more than the subjugation of the world to a Jewish monarchy. They expected a universal peace, peace on earth and peace with God, and all the blessings that peace is supposed to bring in her train; indeed, such a universal submission and reconciliation as is typified by the beasts of prey associating harmlessly with the flocks and herds—more, indeed, than is related of paradise itself.

While it has been readily conceded that the Jews themselves did not understand the predictions of the Messiah in such a sense as that attached to them by certain Christian theologians, it has been

maintained that the sense of an absolute divinity was contained in those predictions for time to unfold. He was to be 'God with us.' He was to be Son of God, and therefore God, as the son must be of the same class of being as the father. He was to have by inherent and original right all the high-sounding titles which in the mouth of the Psalmist or of Isaiah are used as exclusively appertaining to the One Almighty God. But as prophecies are necessarily not so easy to understand and appreciate as fulfilments, and as the words and acts of Christ Himself and of those whom He acknowledged as true believers and disciples are what we have chiefly to rely upon, we are forced to the conclusion that the prophetical titles of Messiah are not to be taken in a sense derogating from the absolute oneness of the Almighty.

LI

SON OF GOD

WITH the eye of faith we penetrate into the spiritual world, and there behold innumerable beings, perfected saints, sons of God, angels, messengers, ministering spirits, all in their way and degree perfect; and, as that perfection must be from God, so far divine. All these are in and of the Almighty so far as they are sustained, directed, and spiritually nourished by Him, and yet they never cease to have perfect freedom of will, for that we suppose to be necessary to their goodness; nor do they ever cease to be distinct, and so far independent, for that we suppose to be involved in their obedience, seeing that obedience is of one being to another.

But here we seem to be brought to the highest point attainable by the human intelligence. Having gone so far, we can go no further. Having, as we might think, attained so near, we find ourselves no nearer. Not only is it easy to conceive innumerable and infinitely various spiritual beings, deriving all that they are and all that they have from the One

Almighty, it may be called impossible not to imagine them and to regard them as probable. A certain instinct urges us towards definite notions of angelic beings, and the prevailing estimate of them is that they are perfectly good in their degree and absolutely obedient, yet as distinct from the Almighty as they are from ourselves. But there we must stop, for we cannot understand Omnipotence except through that which is between us and Omnipotence. So there we stand on the very brink of an impassable gulf, not only between us and the Almighty, but also between us and Him whom we have all our lives been searching for—the ideal of pure goodness. He is infinitely above us, and yet the Son. We are sons. He is the Son ; He is of us, yet infinitely above us.

If we must entertain the question, and must answer it, and must force our own answer upon others who do not so readily answer it, we have at least to consider well what the question is. It is hard to reconcile unity with distinctness. How can there be really One and really Three? For the present let us confine ourselves to what must be called the preliminary question—Can there be really One and really Two, so that we may as we please call the one two or the two one? The Christian, certainly the Church of England man, believes the Son to partake of the nature of the Father in some sense beyond our comprehension. He also believes that the two wills are perfectly accordant, and that

as regards all that comes within our knowledge, what the Son is doing the Father is doing through Him, and what the Father is doing the Son is doing in the measure and degree of Sonship.

How shall there be absolute distinctness of personality and absolute accordance of will? Certainly the whole faith, not to say the whole experience, of the Christian leads towards that conception, even if he may think not quite up to it. The universal belief in angelic ministrations has been adduced, not to prove directly the existence and ministration of the only Son, perfect and obedient, and so far one with the Father, but to show that it is conceivable, inasmuch as so do we habitually conceive of angels in their degree. To this the reply would be, that conceivableness is no proof of fact, or much help to discovery or to belief. Angels, it might be said, are creations of fancy, and if they were meant to prove anything, we might expect to have been allowed to see them and hear what they have to tell us, or to illustrate by their example.

But no longer to speak of angelic beings, every Christian knows, or has good reason to believe, that there are myriads of good people, call them saints or not as we please, doing their duty to God and man, and drawing nearer to God every day of their lives, and so becoming more at one with Him, with no expectation of being taken into a final and absolute unity. Nay, in this matter we are warranted to pass

the line separating the seen and the unseen. Christians generally believe that beyond the gate there are myriads and myriads of glorified and perfected saints existing by the will of God, and doing His will without sharing His divinity. We even hope and believe that they are ever growing in power and in knowledge as well as in love, and that they have a continually nearer insight into the great mystery, and a closer bond with the Author of their being. This is a unity as far as it goes—a unity not measurable, indeed not comprehensible, but conceivable and intelligible. The distinctness of personality remains absolute, even though one should go some way with the poet of Bemerton, who welcomed the thought that he might be a leaf on the divine tree.

The feeble intellect of the East and the indistinctness usually found in a purely contemplative religion show themselves in the ideas of absolute unity or absorption, which efface the personality of the Son of God, and reduce it to an appearance or a personification. All religious errors have been accompanied by large departures from the first principles of morality; or rather, it must be said, all moral corruptions and aberrations have led to corresponding beliefs. For one reason or another the East has been distinguished from the West by brute inhuman despotism, by the absence of public opinion, by polygamy as contrasted with the primitive institution of marriage, by the disregard of the ties

of blood and the destruction of the family whenever high political interests are in question, by the want of true self-respect, by the disbelief in a common origin constituting a universal brotherhood and fatherhood, by the degradation of the female sex, by the constitution of castes owing no love or respect for one another, and by the depreciation of the arts of industry.

When the common tradition has been lost, and with it the primitive sanctities and the earliest ideas of right and wrong, such as those found not only in the Bible, but even in the most ancient laws of Greece and Rome, the whole moral and religious code becomes one confusion throughout, and little more than a *rasa tabula* on which any kind of superstition can write its flattering, or gainful, or convenient inventions. Humanly speaking, and as we find it in actual experience, sonship is the one original and comprehensive foundation of all moral truth and social stability. It furnishes the unfailing link between the past and the future ; it binds all mankind in one with a common centre of affection ; it furnishes the first rules of duty and the last appeal to those that come after us. A single word may shatter a constitution, but that we are sons is indisputable and always survives.

LII

AN APPEAL TO SCRIPTURE

THERE are not a few expressions to which any thoughtful person, more conversant with Scripture than with theological writers, will always feel a repugnance, but which will admit of explanation. Happy indeed that it is so, for most men will endure anything in reason rather than quit the Church in which their lot has been cast, which has been the nursery, the school, and the sphere of all their religious affections. A man so familiar with the New Testament that his memory often reverts to it—the text oftener than the gloss, the simple record oftener than the imported theology, will never cease to feel an inward shock when he reads or hears that God was obedient to His supposed father many years at Nazareth, that God walked about Galilee, that the soldiers spat at God, and struck Him in the face ; that God died and rose again, and that God returned to Heaven. The Scripture does not say this, and it certainly does not come within common apprehension. The theologians are aware of this, and have their reply. We cannot expect all, they

say, to understand the things of God, and the most unlearned clergyman cannot make the attempt to explain the things of God without using words not to be found in the sacred text.

This is a very large subject, and a very serious one, for the mode of speaking referred to is so unlike the simple narrative of the Gospels that it cannot but remind us that we are expressly warned against additions to the Bible. In order to put the matter well before the reader it will not be thought too much to ask his particular attention to each and every one of the following particulars in our Lord's life and ministry.

His birth was announced by the angel Gabriel. He was to be called the Son of God. He was born at Bethlehem, wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger. He was carried into Egypt, and remained there two years. He was found in the Temple hearing the doctors and asking them questions. He said on that occasion, 'Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' He was obedient to Joseph for about thirty years. He was baptised by John, when the Holy Ghost visibly descended on Him and there was heard a voice from heaven, saying, 'Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' This voice was repeated at the Transfiguration. He was led by the Spirit into the wilderness. He fasted there forty days and was tempted of the Devil. He was taken by the Devil to the top of a high mountain that He might see all the world; and

to a pinnacle of the Temple, whence He was invited to throw Himself down, on the assurance that His Father would enable Him to do it safely. He passed a night in secret prayer. He said, 'After this manner pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.' He was recognised by a legion of devils as Jesus, the Son of God. He thanked the Father for revealing these things unto babes. He promised that whosoever should confess Him before men, He would confess him before the Father in heaven. St. Peter said, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God.' Jesus answered, 'Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven.' He slept in a storm. He wept. He said, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' In answer to a fond mother's petition for her sons, He said, 'To sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father.' He said that the times and seasons were in His Father's hands. He declared Himself to be one with His Father. His agony in the Garden was such that the sweat ran down His face like drops of blood. He prayed, saying, 'O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt.' He was kissed by Judas and led bound to the High Priest, thence to Pilate, thence to Herod, thence back to Pilate. On being adjured by the High Priest to say whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, He answered, 'Thou

hast said.' He told Pilate that He had received His power from above, and that the sin of those who gave Him up to the Gentiles was all the greater for it. He was mocked, buffeted, spit upon, scourged, arrayed with derisive regalia, and at last led to Calvary, fainting under the burden of the Cross by the way. He was crucified between two thieves, and mocked by one of them. He prayed to His Father to forgive His murderers. He commended His mother to the care of His beloved disciple. He exclaimed, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' He gave up the ghost. He was pierced. He was laid in a sepulchre. He spoke to Mary Magdalene of His approaching ascent to His Father. He commanded His disciples to preach and baptise in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. He announced to His disciples that all power had been given unto Him. He was seen by Stephen at the right hand of God.

Let us see, with such reverence and such understanding as there is in us, what justification or explanation can be found for calling Jesus of Nazareth simply and absolutely God, and for saying that God came and dwelt among us, and that God came down and Himself paid the penalty of our sins. If the object be to convince us, whether with or against our will, or our reason, then it may be thought sufficient to quote the very title, 'Emmanuel, God with us.' But more will be wanted. The disciples saw before them the Son of God. They were not unprepared to have a visitor from

heaven ; indeed, nobody was in those days : but the very fact of our Lord's pre-eminent and unique claim to the title made a difficulty which had to be got over. Indeed, we have to deal with it. But we have to deal with a much greater difficulty, if the theologians are to be believed. We are called upon to pronounce this person to be not only the Son of God, but Almighty God. How can this be done ? Let us see ; let us try, not for the saving of our souls, but for the peace of the Church of England.

We cannot go beyond the range of our conceptions. In them only can we find a rule for the interpretation of new matter. Fatherhood is inseparable from the idea of God. It always has been, and it is still. But fatherhood implies sonship, and eternal fatherhood implies eternal sonship ; and if the Father Himself be the object of His own fatherhood, then the Father's sonship implies for its proper object the eternal Son. No lower order of being, certainly no created, no fallible being, would satisfy the infinite requirement. As we know nothing of the eternal past beyond some intimations which do not go beyond the 'Beginning,' we may allow theologians to display the very scanty matter at their disposal as best they can.

Sonship is necessary to Fatherhood, and the Son a necessity to the Father, indeed necessary to His completeness, and His very being, such as it is. But what is necessary to the Father, say the theologians, must be of the same 'substance' as the Father, and as that

'substance' is God, for it can be nothing else, then the Son is God, absolutely and nothing else, so far as He was and is the Son of God. As this Divine Person, who had existed from eternity, took human nature as the son of Mary, and became Jesus, not ceasing to be God, Jesus was thus God, and Mary, as a Council declared her, Mother of God. When this was once accepted and established and put into many forms, the Church very naturally thought less and less of the humanity of Christ, and of His active life, work, and words. In fact, it left the record out of sight altogether. But in some matters the Church felt a great exaltation. It made much more of Mary, the Mother of God; it made much more of the ministry appointed in God's place by God Himself, and it made much more of the Kingdom of Heaven, that is the Church, struggling in this world against all earthly laws and Governments, rulers, policies, principles, manners and customs.

Any controversy on the subject will be very futile if it be confined to a comparison of conceptions or ideas. They are not communicable, and therefore they are not comparable. The controversy must and will have to fall back on Scripture and the plain sense of the sacred text. There is no other possible standard, that is, in controversy. No Christian can be far wrong if, in the great and still-increasing confusion of ideas on these subjects, aggravated every day by writers with little pretence to theology, or even com-

mon criticism, he declines to state his standpoint, repudiates dogma, and simply holds to Scripture and to the promise that by the Holy Spirit we shall be led to all saving truth.

From the wise and prudent there will again be an appeal to the 'babes.' How will simple Christian folk read and understand the acts and words of Christ, given above, touching His humanity and His Sonship? Who was the babe that Mary nursed? Who fasted and was hungered? Who was it that slept, that wept, that 'was crucified, dead and buried?' Yet such an appeal is not to be anticipated without the gravest misgivings as to the decision and as to the consequences. Our simple Christian folk are not 'babes' in their own estimation. They have chosen their own leaders, their own interpreters, their own authorities, and, though weak for united action, are trained for dispute. Their strength consists rather in the weakness of the Anglican position than in any common ground of their own. Happily, the coming controversy will not be on words alone. It will hardly be theological. It may not be political. Heaven forbid! It cannot but be chiefly moral, between one manner of spirit and another. Where is the true Christian character most found? Is it in the Church of England, or in the independent and opposing masses? In that question there is hope.

LIII

PERFECT AND FREE

In any question of distinct personality we have to deal with the questions of perfection and of unity as they bear upon freedom of will. Both of these, though the result of choice, are commonly held to supersede it altogether. Take perfection first. An imperfect character—that is, a man who is halting between two opinions; who sees and likes the better part, but takes the worse; who would combine the pleasures of having his own way for a season with the triumphs and rewards of a final renunciation—prizes and enjoys to his cost full liberty of choice. He declines to compromise himself, to commit himself, to bind himself. He is a free man at present, and if in the exercise of that freedom he does what is right and abstains from that which is wrong, it is so much to the good in his account. He does not claim, or desire, or even think of absolute freedom. He is a man, and does not wish to be less than a man, for humanity itself is a sort of bondage. He is a gentleman, and he wishes to act no lesser part. As they

say, *Noblesse oblige.* He belongs to an honourable profession, and he will observe its rules, even its etiquette. He has attached himself to some high cause, and he feels committed to its principles.

He cannot help all this, for it is necessary to have a certain *status* or position. But he still wishes for a large amount of liberty, and feels that nothing whatever would compensate for the entire loss of it. He finds it, however, a lifelong struggle. Every day, everywhere, in every relation of life, there occur questions between further binding oneself to the good and leaving it still an open question. It is not merely that certain acts and indulgences may be more agreeable to his taste than a strict denial, but a man accustomed to do what he likes to do really resents the idea of being a slave even to virtue or to any well-defined form of honesty and propriety.

Conscientiousness is repulsive to most men. They cannot quite love a strictly conscientious man, if only because his presence is a bondage to them. He is a living law. They can safely admire him, and even love him, when he is gone; but they cannot bear the continual call to order, truth, and goodness in his living presence. All this arises from the fact that men will not be bound, though in truth they are only hugging the chains of self-indulgence, folly, or what not. Thus freedom of will comes to be a certain kind of indecision, that is, a choice not yet made, continually postponed, and eventually left unmade. If

there can be supposed a man absolutely good, we imagine it to be by the complete sacrifice of the very power to choose, thus rendering a man simply the embodiment of an idea, or the personation of some higher Power.

Of course all this is worse than foolish. It is illogical. On some points, such as those which concern their place in society, and in their own particular circles, the indecisive may be practically incapable of such deeds as those, for example, that fill the columns of our law courts or police courts. In these matters they have no longer a real liberty of choice, for they feel they could not do such things. Yet they do not regard that as any diminution of their own personality. They even think it, as far as it goes, a very great enhancement. They are bound to go further, and to see that the man who is best in all respects is not only the greatest man but really the freest man.

This is so prominently, frequently, and variously stated in the Bible, and is yet so contrary to the prevailing ideas of the old world, indeed of many sections of society to this day, that it may be called a doctrine of revelation. Obedience and liberty appear as indissolubly associated in the institutions and fortunes of the Chosen Race. They are alike the theme of lawgivers, prophets, and historians. In the New Testament the perfect law of liberty is presented in the very words of our Lord as reported by St. John, from the Jewish quarter by St. James, and from the

Gentile by St. Paul. All kinds of slavery are associated in the sacred text with sin, and freedom with obedience.

Thus, though it cannot be said that perfection is ever attained, and though it has to be confessed that there is no such thing as a perfect man, yet, as Christians, we are bound to admit that, the nearer a man is to perfection, the freer he is. If this be a difficulty, indeed an apparent absurdity, it is not so to the good, in whom duty has subjugated passion and license, but only to those who have habitually declined to the slavery of their own irregular wills.

But if, indeed, the better men are the freer they are, it follows necessarily that the best is also the freest, and that there is nothing unphilosophical in regarding the 'Only Begotten Son,' whom we call the very image of His Father, as a personality distinct from Him, Father and Son having perfectly accordant wills, exercised in relation to one another.

So long as people will insist on applying mathematics, that is, criticism of a thoroughly mathematical character, to divine questions, they will arrive at one of two conclusions in the matter before us, both equally impossible and absurd to a religious mind. They will settle in the conception of a free will liable to error, and in fact more or less erroneous ; or of a free will not liable to error, and therefore, as they conclude, absolutely Divine, and neither more nor less than an operation or manifestation of the Deity.

Now it is a great truth that Christ is an operation and a manifestation of the Almighty, but, to use a common expression, it is only half the truth. The Almighty is everywhere, in every being, in every word and deed, even in His only Son, and in all He said and did, and still does for us. The same must be said, in a certain measure and in a special sense, of all that is good in the life, act, and word of any good man. But certainly, if we are to make that which 'is written' our rule of faith and conception in this matter, the Son of God, while united with the Father, both by the indwelling of the Father and by the absolute accordance of will and perfection of obedience, is still distinct from the Father, as, too, is any Christian in whom dwells the Spirit, and who in a measure is obedient, and one with Father, Son, and Spirit. The difficulty, then, must ever be in understanding the unity and the individuality which exists in ourselves, and perhaps it may be said we have all to think more about our own natures and our own relations to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit, before we pronounce them to be simply and only operations and manifestations of one God—one 'Triune God,' as it is now the fashion to style the Almighty.

Christ was presented first to the Jews, and then, through their belief, their anticipations, and their ideas, to the rest of the world. As their whole history and their whole religion was a preparation for Him, so too were their prevailing opinions. When Christ

was preached to the outer world, it was to philosophical Jews and Judaizing philosophers. All had difficulties to get over and lessons to be learnt in order to a just conception of Him whom they were now to acknowledge as their supreme spiritual Lord and Master—the Son of God, now at the right hand of His Father in heaven.

To those who are ready to believe Providential designs, such must be a remarkable change in the Jewish mind, effected, it is said, by the Captivity. As it is expressed, they took idols to Babylon and brought back angels. From that date they were purged of their idolatry and expecting angelic ministrations. But who and what were these beings thus filling the void left by the departure of a long and evil possession? The question remains to this day, and it is still preliminary to the greater question, still contributory to the truth—Who and what are these beings?

No Christian can doubt that there are such beings, and that they have their ranks, offices, special functions, continual service, and frequent errands. Can they have what may be called wills of their own? Can they disobey? Can they even wish to disobey? Can they feel anything but pleasure in the execution of the Divine commands? The usual belief is that they are as certain to do their work as if they were simply elemental agencies in the hands of the Almighty. The Theist, indeed, sees no place or necessity for them.

Many who believe themselves to be Christians, either, like the Sadducees of old, do not believe in angels at all, or think it matter of very small account. Only the other day a riotous company of English gentlemen and ladies, including the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of an Indian Presidency, performed what they cheerfully called, and very suitably acted, a Dance of Devils, in which the said ministers of Satan dragged the angels one by one from heaven down to their own Tartarean abyss. So at least is it stated in a usually well-informed newspaper. It is possible these foolish people had something to say for themselves. The services of angels and men in a wonderful order, and the appointment of holy angels to succour and defend us, are annually commemorated by our Church ; yet for a hundred references to the angels as supposed types of the fair sex we scarcely hear one to them as messengers from God to man. There are preachers who never name them except with an apology, as if in condescension to human weakness.

The angelic order is part of the mediatorial system which pervades the action of the Almighty in His dealings with intelligent beings. Before, indeed out of the Creation, how far back in eternity none can say or divine, angels had not only free will, but the power to fall, as indeed some did fall, to be employed henceforth in work more agreeable it is to be presumed to their depraved dispositions. But within

the sphere of God's operations with the descendants of Adam there has been no record of rebellion or other failure of duty on the part of angels, and we must conclude them to be perfected according to their possibilities and their opportunities. The theologians tell us they cannot have been created good, and that what real goodness they have must have come by the proper exercise of free will under trial. Yet there they are, perfect beings, one with God in all they will and do, yet in no sense God, or sharers of His whole nature, or contributing by necessity to the perfection of His being. It is not necessary that we should attempt a comparison between these exalted beings and Him through whom they and all things were created, but it is as well we should bear in mind that the oldest distinct and specific title given to Him in Holy Writ is 'the Captain of the Lord's hosts.'

LIV

UNITY AND FREEDOM

UNITY and free will are not inconsistent, but may yet be regarded from opposite points of view. If unity is pushed too far, it must be at the cost of free will, indeed to its extinction in the end. If free will be allowed to proceed without check or management, it will prevent or frustrate unity. There can be no moral unity without the exercise of free will, for without that it cannot be a union of wills or a blending of wills, or a united submission of wills, or a common will. The relations of unity and free will—the two facts, the two instincts, the two cravings, present themselves even to the infant mind, and only change their matter and form at each successive stage of life. Nothing worthy of child or man can be accomplished without unity of some sort with higher, lower, and equals. The imperious and self-confiding reduce companions, or schoolfellows, or neighbours, or a whole country to a slavish obedience—that is, to a union involving the surrender of all other wills to one. Where the scale of morality, that is, of moral inde-

pendence, is low, that becomes the most convenient, indeed the only possible course.

But no empire, no tyranny, was ever found strong enough or pleasing enough to extinguish the will. That potent, that divine faculty, ever exists and exerts itself, and its very abuses and corruptions tell us what it might have done, what its possessors might have been, and what all might have done, had they appealed to it more urgently and more conscientiously. What a thing, indeed, it is for a man to be able to choose the good and to eschew the evil! Without its full and free exercise there can be no unity worth the name. Such a unity is made up of many contributions from distinct wills, formed under different circumstances and representing different and even apparently conflicting requisites.

Unity and freedom are the charm and the law of marriage, of families, of States, of great causes, and of all the pursuits that employ our highest tastes and faculties. Even art has both its common rules and its individual excellences. The best use we can make of free choice is to attain perfect obedience, which seems practically to supersede choice altogether. Yet that we become willingly obedient is always felt to be the best reward of a choice well made and consistently observed. We must, then, regard this very idea as divinely implanted and providentially sustained. But it will be asked, 'Is the idea of perfect union through perfect obedience a fact, and is the conception of

earthly origin or an eternal reality?' That question need not be answered. The idea would not be given us, and would not occupy so high a place in our hearts and minds, if there were not a reality which is the substance of the thing hoped for. It cannot be for no purpose at all that the Almighty has so deeply worked into our natures the idea of a perfect union, combined with individual distinctness and with mutual relation.

As human society grows and ripens under the fostering care of the Mighty Parent, it gathers into itself all that is good and generous, all that is lovely and of good report, as a tree draws into its roots the suitable elements from the surrounding soil. The food of the body-politic lies around it in the rude and elemental form of spontaneous impulses, capricious opinions, passions calling for control, and tastes requiring regulation. When all consult only their respective inclinations and interests, the interests of all are neglected. The States that have received the higher inspiration and accepted the mission fuse and mould all this wild matter into institutions, laws written or unwritten, lines of precedent, duties, customs, titles, dignities, codes of honour and politeness, as well as an external grandeur befitting a great moral unity. They who have but the sense to love and honour unity in its intrinsic majesty, naturally compete for a share in it, knowing that in no other way can they raise themselves from their own mediocrity, or worse vileness. So can they share the best creation within

their reach. But they have to do this by continual subordination, not to one but to a thousand wills, and by always making the best of affairs from which they can never come out wholly victorious or even wholly unscathed.

It is something very much greater than themselves to which they have to be always bowing and bending. What or who that is, whether it is an ideal, or a net-result, or a culmination, or one whom they can invest with personal attributes, they know not, perhaps even heed not, perhaps even shrink from knowing; but they have to shape their ends and fashion their designs to it. Thus in the heart of every human being there is both that which he recognises not of himself, and also that of himself which is in accord and unison with it.

The combination of perfect unity and perfect freedom can scarcely be said to exist within human knowledge. It is the indissoluble union of several persons remaining free to act and willingly performing their respective parts in the same work. If we leave the very tender ground of domestic and family unions, and proceed to the larger unions of society, and of parties, and of States, there we certainly find no entire agreement and no common action attainable without pressure on one side and submission on the other.

The state of things in our own United Kingdom presents it too readily. But political parties are voluntary, and no one need belong to them a day

longer than he pleases. In matter of fact, one-half of the party will be found overbearing the other half, and both may find themselves at variance with their chief, in which case either the head or the members have to give way. Sometimes it is found that the members, that is, the rank and file of the party, are very compliant, and indeed expectant, quite at the service of their head, and ready to take what is called a leap into the dark at his suggestion. But this is seldom quite the case. A mere trifle in the general account, perhaps only the exaggerated self-esteem of individuals, may lead to a little recalcitrance against the dictatorship. They raise the cry, 'We are the party. We are a self-governing body.' It is the business of the leader to lead his party where they wish to be led. The leader sometimes whips them into obedience, sometimes throws up the ungrateful task.

These are homely details, but the Almighty is in them, and we are formed in them. The great truths of creation can be learned in the minutest creature as well as in the biggest, and whatever is to be known of the Deity can be learnt at our doors. If anybody thinks the subject is only complicated and degraded by a reference to human affairs, let him continue so to think. But let him also abstain from that vivisection of the Divine nature in which some writers delight, and which does not always render them either sensible, or scrupulous, or tender hearted. Most certain it is

that human nature craves for both unity and freedom of action. When it has freedom it wants co-operation, and when it enjoys union it wants not only the right of private judgment, but the opportunity, the liberty, and the power to use it. These wants cannot but be felt, and cannot be quite realised. The realisation is at least conceivable.

Any question of unity and free-will might seem to relate only to such matters as men have opinions, rivalries, and divisions upon. But the truth is, everybody who is doing his duty, submitting to necessity, pursuing a lawful industry or trade, following the dictates of common sense, or prosecuting a useful and interesting study, is so far at once a free agent and in unison with the Almighty. The philosopher who is investigating the wonderful laws of Nature or the mysteries of the creation, owes to the Creator the motive, the possibility, the pleasure, and the result of his inquiry, and so far is at one with God, and yet undoubtedly free to pursue his inquiry or to drop it, to do that for truth's sake or for pride sake, to make a good use of his discoveries, or a bad use, as he pleases.

The simple, ungarnished, and unsophisticated presentment of our Lord in Holy Scripture is found to agree with all we know of our own spiritual growth and of the better social and political constitutions. In these the upward tendency is by a continual exercise of free-will towards union and perfection, as far as they are conceivable and possible. Free-will may be

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a perilous gift, but none can doubt its existence. Obedience may sometimes be hard, but we know it to be due. Union may be almost hopeless, but it is still hoped for. Perfection may be a long way off, but we believe it to be still attainable. In earthly affairs we hold these aspirations, these beliefs rather, to be not only compatible but mutually assistant. Practically and confessedly we feel that we never shall be at once free, obedient, united, and good. But we have before us One who in these matters is pre-eminently the Author and Finisher of our Faith—the Son of God.

Granting, then, as we can hardly help doing, that human affairs lead up to heavenly truth, all experience warns us to cling to the solid foundation, and insist upon its preservation in its full integrity. He through whom we are born again, in whom we hope to be perfected, and with whom we desire to be like-minded, is the Son, and as a son does His duty to the Heavenly Father, and shows us how to do ours. To that Heavenly Father He is the way, the truth, and the life, not less the Beginning because also the End.

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